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The Wind Cave Mystery

-:- Or -:-

Haunts of Fear

By Frederic Knowles

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CHAPTER I.

WHAT rare adventures and risks, both of heart and head, befell me with my inheriting of the Wind Cave property, I will here try truthfully to relate. For some time the mystery of the region was a dark and grizzly thing to me, but it yielded finally to the penetrating mind of a member of the secret service, the strange youth who had played a part in my adventure at Wells Canyon, eight years before.

In that perilous adventure my friend Alton Rodgers had been concerned. So far as I knew he was now happily married and settled down. I myself had turned to my law practice and was content, when again a tremendous change in my life took place.

My Uncle Henry Hamilton died and left me a modest fortune in railroad stocks, together with his little country place at Wind Cave. Amazing and perilous things befell me there. It was early autumn, however, before I had disposed of my law business and taken possession.

The country there is hilly, with heavy timber and numerous streams and small lakes. Lake Prince, the largest of the latter, lies just down the slope from the house. The cottage is a rather modest one, with wide verandas and a big lawn in front surrounded by a low stone wall. There is a boathouse with a power launch and a catboat, and a little garage with two cars. All these I inherited with the property.

At the point where the hollow, or basin, as it is called in the West, forms Lake Prince, a number of prominent cliffs raise irregular heads above the pines, some on the slopes and others at the edge of the water. As a result of a flaw in nature, or caused by the action of some underground stream long gone dry, one of the larger faces of gray rock some thousand yards north of the cottage boasts a peculiar cavity on the side facing the lake. The water washes continually into the opening with a

gurgling sound, and then wind at evening, striking the cave at an angle, produces some such sound as results from blowing into the mouth of a large bottle. If you can imagine a bottle with a neck ten feet across, you will understand. When the breeze becomes a gale, as once in a while occurs, this sound may be heard for a mile. And so my Uncle Henry, after little hesitation, decided on a name for his cottage.

There are no neighbors, and the whole surrounding country is sparsely populated. The only explanation I can give for the cottage being there is that the idea was conceived by my uncle. Another man in his financial situation would have chosen a colony somewhere to build his summer home—but not Henry Hamilton. Ever eccentric, almost peculiar in many ways, the idea of such a place to spend a part of the long summer days appealed to him strongly, and so the carpenters were sent down from the city. Brownsville, the nearest village, is fourteen miles across the hills, but fair roads and a good car make the journey almost insignificant in the summer.

It was my custom the first few weeks after my arrival to take the roadster and go down to Brownsville every afternoon and come back at dusk. I did everything in a leisurely way those days. All my life my ambitions had been vague; I suppose I came very nearly being lazy. Of course, for a long time I strove against this, knowing the outcome, but after I came into this modest fortune and saw my future safely provided for, I obeyed my leisurely impulses more and more each day. After rising rather early I usually went for a sail or a ramble over the hills in the morning and returned only for lunch about two. Then I got the car out, and leaving Archie, my only servant, in charge, motored away to the village, where I put in the afternoon as best I might, and then rolled homeward under the stars, with my car lamps cutting big holes in the dim road ahead. And so passed the first days of early fall.

And then one day came the first flutter of snow. To be sure, it was gone in a few hours. The earth, still warm with summer, drank the cold moisture greedily, and the following day all sign of the thin white carpet was gone from the open places. But, nevertheless, it was a warning, and when it snowed again the following Saturday I sent Archie to the city for my cutter and team, in order that I might not be outdone by any of the natives in the event it would not be back until the coming Tuesday. After breakfast on Sunday, time hung heavy on my hands, and so I strolled down to the water.

The lake as yet showed no sign of ice, but lay black and clear within its shores. A keen wind from the northeast tempted me for a last sail. The boat had already been moved out of the water with the [illegible] toward dismantling her, save to unstep the mast. With the aid of some rollers I dropped her down the incline into the lake and put up the mast. All this took some little time, and as I got into her it seemed to me that even during my half-hour within the shelter of the boathouse the wind had freshened slightly and become more chill.

I was of half a mind to give over my idea. I am no sailor. Lake Prince is nine miles long and can give a very fair idea of a storm in miniature upon occasions. I hesitated and glanced out across the water. Rollers were already in motion beyond the shelter of the point, and it was only against my better judgment that I shoved off. And so began my adventure.

CHAPTER II.

AS I HAVE said, the wind was from the northeast, that is to say on my quarter as I put off. A hundred yards out the low shore no longer protected me, and I was subjected to a rather severe gale. With the single sail reefed, my craft tore along at a good rate, with its nose low in the water and sending occasional little spurts of spray over the bow. My experience with sailboats had been limited, and always in the company of a second person till my coming to Wind Cave. There, during the days of early fall, I had spent a great deal of time on the water and learned to handle the Mouse—I had not possessed the heart to change Uncle Henry's appellation—fairly well. Of course, I lacked in technical terms applied to sailing, and my nautical conversation would have seemed very landlubberly indeed to those who go down to the sea in ships, but I had mastered the rudiments at least, and sailed for the most part confidently. Once or twice I had ventured forth when the lake was being swept by a sharp wind, and had come thru unscathed, but I instantly knew all my former experience could not hold with this day.

Once clear of the point which ran out some hundred yards to my right, and the short, wicked rollers were under me, and the Mouse danced along at a great rate. The first moment I was very nearly frightened as she heeled down with the wind, and I turned and ran before it a little until I was calmer and my confidence had returned. I realized instantly that I had done a very foolish thing for one so unskilled at this business as myself, but that could not be helped now. It is true I could have headed in to my left slightly and beached the craft there and escaped with a wetting, for the shore is gently sloping at this place and for the most part gravel. But the idea was distasteful to me, and I hated to own I was beaten at the start. Besides, the Mouse would in all probability be swept away despite my efforts, and become lost or wrecked at the southern end of the lake. I told myself I could always follow that course if things reached a really dangerous turn, and so put the idea of abandoning her, for the moment at least, out of my mind.

I stated that the lake is nine miles long. The greater length lies to the north and south, with the boathouse slightly nearer the northern end on the eastern side. The wind was from the northwest. Running before it, I had about five miles of water to traverse before reaching the southern shore. This end of the lake is bordered by swamps and great groves of trees coming right down to the water's edge, and there is little beach there. I felt doubtful of a safe landing at this place, for the waves, having reached their maximum power there, would be considerable, and in landing I could not hope for anything but a complete wreck of the Mouse.

The rate of speed at which I was going would put five miles behind in a very little while. Something must be done if I would escape disaster. With my sail reefed down to a mere shred of canvas, and with no small degree of apprehension, I somewhat altered my course so that the wind was more than ever on my quarter. The craft heeled slightly and went on with scarcely diminished speed, the little pennant on the masthead standing out like a board. Confident at this, I crawled up on the weather rail, and put her about still more. The Mouse flattened at that until the round of her bottom was exposed, and tore on with the short, choppy waves going over occasionally. The Mouse is half-decked and with a tiny cabin forward. I had taken care that the sliding door by which you enter this cabin was tightly closed, and so the waves splashed into the cockpit and out thru the lee scuppers without effecting any damage except a thoro wetting to myself.

At the moment I scarce noticed the latter, altho the wind was chill and stung thru my drenched garments. Excitement had taken possession of me for the time, and I was thoroly occupied with the task before me, that of keeping the Mouse afloat and on her course. The wind had, if anything, increased. The sail was a mere patch now, but the pressure against the small portion exposed was tremendous, and kept the craft almost on her beam ends as she tore along. As for myself, I clung to the weather rail, bracing myself as best I might against [illegible] just the thing, and used my w[illegible] far as possible to counteract [illegible]e of the gale.

I was wet and cold, and my hands were red with the sting of it, and yet I almost enjoyed the tremor of the craft under me as we tore away thru the short, choppy billows and toward the blue line of the farther shore. There was protection there, I knew, if only I could reach the sheltering point slightly to windward. Point Scarlet, I had dubbed it, one afternoon some weeks before, as I ran past it and noticed the beech trees along it in all their frosted glory. As the Mouse raced on I could make out dimly the line of white trunks and bare branches now shorn of leaves, as they stood out against the darker pines beyond.

The drift to leeward of my craft was considerable, and I saw I must put the boat closer into the wind if I would make the safety of the point. I shoved the tiller down hard and hung on grimly. The sudden heave as the wind caught her fair nearly dislodged me, and I feared she would never come up from that first plunging roll. But the strip of lead on her keel saved me just in time and she foamed onward, half the time awash and with the swamped cockpit dragging down the stern.

The point was closer now; I could even hear the shriek of the wind on the rocky ridge and among the low-bowed trees. My coat had come open and flapped about me, and my dislodged cap went winging away with a sudden gust. The Mouse groaned with the pressure, but gamely staggered on thru the spray, while the taut little rigging hummed at the breaking point.

Ahead, a little mountain of foam, and I had shot past, missing a cruel rock by a handbreath. A final furious breath that drove the Mouse on her beam ends and pitched me from my position down into the swamped cockpit where I clutched convulsively at the rail, and the boat had shot behind the protection of the point and the comparative quiet there. I scrambled to my feet, beached the Mouse on the gravel a hundred yards further in, and dropped the sail. Splashing thru the shallow water I placed the tiny anchor securely between two bowlders, where only the breaking of the rope would have loosed it, and looked about me.

CHAPTER III.

I WAS thoroly drenched and chilled to the marrow. Even had the elements smiled, I would have hesitated to put out again in an attempt to make the opposite shore and the boathouse there. First I must have a fire. I searched my pockets only to produce an ornate match-safe, as wet inside as out. For a moment I was disheartened, but, remembering the cabin on the Mouse, I splashed back to her, and crawled stiffly over the weather rail as she lay slightly careened on the sand. With some little difficulty I got the door open, and, stooping low, went inside. The cabin, if it might be called that, was about eight feet long by half that in breadth, and with a small locker at the forward end.

Slipping the catch, I threw back the cover. A pair of rough canvas trousers and a coat of the same material lay on top, articles I had used on fishing excursions. These, together with a sweater lying beneath, I caught up instantly. In a moment I was removing my wet garments and donning the others so luckily at hand. Even without underwear they were a decided change for the better, and I was nearly comfortable save for my soaking feet, as I examined the remaining contents of the locker. At the very bottom, beside a box of fishing tackle, lay a little case of matches. I caught them up hurriedly, and as I did so I heard a sudden sound that came ever so faintly to me above the splash of the ripples. I turned in time to see a figure climb over my craft's rail and look in at me as I crouched beside the locker. He was a tall, fair-haired fellow, about six feet, I should say, with a tanned skin and several days' beard on his chin. He was wearing a mackinaw such as is used by lumbermen, corduroys and high shoes that reached to the knee. He stared at me curiously.

"Hello," said I shortly, resenting his glance somehow.

"Hello yourself," he returned. "In trouble?"

I got to my feet with the box of matches in my hand. "[illegible]," I told him, "but I need a fire [illegible]e same. Any dry wood on shore?"

"I reckon," he returned. "Got an ax?"

"No."

"Well, mebbe you can do without one by goin' back a little ways in the timber. Storm drive you in?"

I nodded briefly and stooped to pass him.

"Pretty little craft," he said, as if anxious to encourage conversation. "Belong to you?"

I nodded and dropped over the rail with my wet garments under my arm. The fellow glanced past me at the sand, and then at the trees.

"Better go a little way to build a fire," he suggested. "Need help?"

I told him I thought I would do very well alone.

"Can help you as well as not," he urged, and dropped into the water after me and waded ashore without apparently giving a thought to his boots.

We walked up the hard sand and into the fringe of trees, while I wondered who the fellow could be. Some one I had never seen before, I decided. I remembered that Archie had once told me of several characters who made their living by trapping and the like in the streams and lakes of the vicinity. No doubt this was some such sort of fellow, I figured, and dismissed him with that.

The trees were thick and the trunks interwoven with underbrush and creepers at this point, and one could not see ten yards in any direction. In this shelter the wind could be heard roaring overhead, while it did not penetrate the thicket below. After a moment I found a little opening some ten yards across, and paused with a glance at my companion.

"Good a place as any," he said, anticipating my thought, and began to break branches from a small dead pine, all the while talking and making a great deal of noise. With my knife I whittled some shavings, and soon had a little fire going, which I fed with larger twigs and finally small branches until it was a good blaze. After a fashion built a rough framework by thrusting branches into the earth, and hung my wet clothing over it as near the fire as I dared.

"You the feller that lives across the lake?" asked my companion, at length.

I nodded briefly.

"I figured so," he said, dropping beside the fire.

"And you?" I questioned, thinking my right for information as good as his.

"My name's Roper," he returned. "I don't live nowhere in particular, you might say. Trap in the winter, and make enough to hold out thru the summer. Not much in sight this winter, tho."

"No?" I said.

"You see furs is low this season; I reckon it will be mighty hard sleddin'. You goin' to stay here all winter?"

"So far as I know," I replied.

"Rich, ain't you?" he demanded rather suddenly.

"If you weren't a friend," I retorted, "I would tell you it wasn't any of your business."

"But, bein' a friend," he suggested, with a curious drawl, and then waited, as tho expecting some sort of answer.

"But being a friend," I finished, "I suppose I shall have to tell you that I am fairly well off as this world looks at things."

"I thought so," he said, and turned away to pick up a branch for the fire. As he stooped I saw with mild curiosity the tip of a pistol holster peeping below his coat. He glanced about to see me watching, but said nothing, and I forgot the incident for the moment.

"And so you are rich?" he said casually, as he sat down again. "Then I reckon you wouldn't miss a little boat like that one you come in?"

"Well, it wouldn't exactly break me up," I confessed, "but nevertheless I shouldn't like to lose it."

"You would get over it, tho," he insisted.

"I suppose so," I returned, "but I don't intend anything like that."

"No?" he said slowly.

"What made you ask?" I demanded curiously.

"Oh, I was watchin' you and wonderin' if you'd ever make shore," he explained, "for there at the last I thought you wouldn't."

"You were watching?"

"From the point, yes."

He was silent for a minute after that. I replenished the fire, and then lay back in the warmth and waited for my clothes to dry. Presently my companion spoke again.

"Goin' to try and cross again tonight?" he asked.

"Not unless the wind goes down," I told him.

"She won't for a while yet."

"But it ought to be fairly calm by evening," I protested.

"I reckon you are right," he said absently, and glanced past me as he spoke.

"See something?" I asked, noting his look.

He faced about at that and watched me a moment curiously.

"No," he said, "I was just thinkin'."

"Oh," said I, and lapsed into silence.

Overhead the wind roared thru the trees, but not so strongly as before, I thought. I approached my companion on the subject after some little observation had strengthened my belief.

"I reckon so," he answered, "but you can't tell. If I was you I'd lay snug here a while yet. I don't reckon you ever sailed a boat much."

I shook my head.

"Well," he said, "I reckon that's an art. I never could."

"No?" said I, and the conversation lagged again. I glanced at my watch; it showed twenty minutes past noon. I raised my eyes to inform my companion of the fact, and saw him looking past me again, his head in the attitude of one listening.

"Them waves," he said briefly, noticing my eyes on him; "I was just trying to figure out if they was lettin' up any."

"Oh," I remarked, but somehow I did not believe him.

Perhaps he sensed this, for he suddenly got to his feet and stood half facing me with his eyes on the tree trunks beyond. I was becoming nervous. The fellow's conduct, his pointed questions and vague answers hinted at something I could not discern for the moment. With as much calmness as I might summon, I glanced about in the direction he was facing, thinking I might discover something. But to my eyes, at least, there was nothing visible save the trees, the dense underbrush and overhead the tossing branches. And yet the fellow's attitude was not that of the casual observer; he had undoubtedly been listening intently for—I knew not what.

"You are a queer one," I said presently.

"I reckon that's true," he returned. "It's the woods, I guess. Bein' alone so much a fellow gets the habit. For days at a time I don't see nobody, and a man gets lonesome after a spell, and is always watchin' for some one to come

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along. Mighty near like an animal, I reckon."

"But it is fear that keeps wild animals on the watch," I told him.

"That's right," he assured me, with a laugh. "I guess that wasn't a good comparison. Know anything else instead."

"The man might have fear, also," I said casually.

"So he might," he agreed. "Now mebbe I am scared of somethin'?"

"Perhaps," I told him, and then, after a glance at his figure, went on: "But I would think ordinary danger wouldn't bother you to any extent."

"That's so, but then you can only watch one way at a time."

"And so you practice listening?" I inquired, watching for some change in his countenance.

But there was none. He merely nodded and put his hands into his pockets absently. I felt my drying clothing, and stirred the fire and added fuel while my strange companion observed me curiously.

"Them things won't be dry for an hour yet," he assured me presently. "Heavy clothes like those soak up a lot of water. You ought to have wrung 'em the first thing. Now——" He broke off suddenly and glanced across the fire toward me, yet he did not stir from his place.

Scarcely conscious of my act, I had sprung to my feet suddenly at this unexpected disturber of the silence given over to the wind. From behind me somewhere, had come two shots so closely together that the reports nearly blended.

"What was that?" I demanded.

"Search me," he said briefly. He seemed more at ease than since his coming, altho I noticed that his eyes never left me a moment now.

"Some one in trouble," I hazarded, and took a step toward the beach, for it was from that direction the shots had come. There was a rustle behind me that brought me up short, and I faced about to see my companion watching me with level gaze. His face had grown grim.

"Don't bother looking into it," he said briefly. "Nobody is in trouble. Jest set down by the fire and keep quiet."

"Perhaps some one needs help—those shots were from the lake."

"Sit down," he repeated grimly. "I know what I'm doin'."

I remembered the weapon under his coat and that I was unarmed. Altho his curt order made my blood boil, I could do nothing but comply, and I turned back and threw myself down savagely.

"You needn't take it so hard," he told me calmly enough.

"If it wasn't for that gun, you wouldn't tell me what to do," I retorted. "What's your idea, anyway?"

"Never mind. Just keep quiet a little."

"I am beginning to believe you are a scoundrel," I cried.

"So soon?" he asked. "Why, my wife has knowed me ten years and hasn't found that out yet. I'm beginnin' to believe you're bright."

"And so you are married?" I demanded. It had suddenly occurred to me that married men are more apt to leave some clew, and this mysterious business already had me interested to the point where I decided to investigate at the first opportunity.

"I was," he said, and laughed, and I knew that he had been playing with me. This realization, you may readily believe, did not improve my temper.

"What's your idea?" I demanded. "I'll have you up for your smartness. Without that gun you couldn't force me to stay here!"

"But seein' as I have it," he returned, "I reckon you will be mild for another minute or two. Just rest there easy like and don't get heavy."

I did not reply, having already regretted my futile anger, but lay quietly enough by the fire. In a few minutes my companion arose.

"You did fine," he said, with mild sarcasm. "That's all for today, I believe. Just a tip, pardner: I would change my mind about stayin' here all winter."

"I'll do nothing of the sort," I retorted.

"Better think it over. And one thing more: If you should happen to notice anything curious o' nights, don't pay any attention. I guess you ain't seen nothing yet, and so just try to keep your noticin'-average about that place."

"What are you talking about?" I demanded.

"Oh, nothin'. Well, remember that, mister. I gotta be goin'. Here's a tip for you: Hang about till 'dark, and you'll come out all right."

With this brief statement, he faced about and disappeared among the trees. I heard brief crackling of branches under his feet, and he had gone while I still puzzled over his final words.

But crowding out all else was my overpowering curiosity concerning the two shots from the direction of the lake. Without doubt it was for them my strange companion had been listening while we sat by the fire. It all came back to me now. Undoubtedly his sudden appearance, his conversation, his offer to accompany me, and his determination to keep me with him were all in the carrying out of some premeditated plan. And what plan? A sudden alarming idea came to me, an idea that sent me to my feet and crashing thru the underbrush toward the shore of the lake. I emerged upon the gravel and glanced about anxiously.

My worst fears were realized; the beach was bare. Before me the waves of the lake tossed without sign of any object. The Mouse was gone!

CHAPTER IV.

FOR a moment I stood as if stunned and studied the expanse of water before me dully. From my position a large portion of the lake to windward was visible, but Point Scarlet, running out as it did, obstructed my vision to the north and northeast. Thinking to gain some sight of my craft in that direction, perhaps, I turned about and ran along the curve of the beach that followed the contour of the point. Two-thirds of the way out I faced up the hill and climbed hurriedly among the beech trees that grew in straggling disorder below the summit. Emerging after a minute on the top, I steadied myself against the gale and looked ahead anxiously. As I have stated, the wind had abated somewhat, but with the lessening of its fury I saw a long bank of mist, evidently snow or sleet, sweeping along the lake. Already it obstructed the farther shore and was speedily nearing me. Against this immense curtain of grayish white I saw the speck of what was undoubtedly the Mouse already a good mile away, and going strongly as she heeled low in the water. I noted dully that she carried a fair expanse of sail, in spite of her course and the wind, and so knew that some sailor of experience and skill must be aboard. Powerless to prevent this outrage, I stood shivering on my cold lookout and watched the mist swallow her up.

"You needn't take it so hard," he told me.

For the deed I could at the moment discover no cause. The robbers could not hope to make way with her; their ultimate capture, I felt, was certain. Winter was at hand, and in a few days the lake must become frozen over and so make travel by water craft impossible. Realizing that these unknown scoundrels would know this as well as myself I decided that some other motive must have prompted the theft. Then what? I had not the faintest idea. With no small degree of anger, I faced about and descended to the beach again and made my way back to the fire, for my scanty attire had offered slight protection against the cold on that exposed place.

When the blaze had warmed me, I dropped down beside it and began to view my situation as calmly as I could. With no means for crossing the lake I must go around it—a considerable trip in any weather on account of the swamps and the forests with their vast expanses of underbrush. I was, at a conservative estimate, fifteen or sixteen miles' journey by the way I should be forced to go. I glanced at my watch and saw it was nearly 1 o'clock. I had eaten very little that morning, and my violent exertion on the lake had made me decidedly hungry. Already flakes were beginning to sift down in the open place about my fire. If I ventured far from the lake on my journey, I could very easily become lost in the dense woods and the oncoming snow, and because of the storm, following the beach itself was impossible. And yet I could not stay where I was, for I would surely starve. Archie would not be back to Wind Cave until Tuesday, and even after discovering my absence would not know where to search for me. Weeks might elapse before I would be found.

It was true that game existed about me, but I had no way of killing it. I had never felt so thoroly helpless as at that moment. I was at a place where my fortune did not aid me any. My coming out safely from this dilemma must depend entirely upon my unaided efforts. With a heavy heart I changed, shivering, to my other clothing, which was now nearly dry. My shoes, light affairs with thin rubber soles, and of course ideal for the boat, were very nearly useless here; they would go to pieces in a mile. I examined them ruefully. They would never do, I decided, and wondered if I might contrive something from the canvas trousers to protect my feet in the long, long walk.

And then suddenly I paused, remembering something. It was what the tall fellow in the mackinaw jacket had said upon leaving. "Here's a tip for you: Hang about till dark and you'll come out all right," were his words. I took heart at this, and somehow I believed him, altho knowing he had deceived me in other things. Until dark. That would be nearly five hours, I decided. Should I depend on his word? What aid could I receive at dark? I could think of but one possibility—that the Mouse might be brought back. I knew of no boats but mine on the lake. My motor launch was being overhauled and so was unfit for service. Truly, the Mouse was the only explanation. In an instant I had decided to chance it. I was doubtful of my ability to make my way around the lake in the face of so many difficulties; I should perhaps perish miserably after having striven futilely. Did I not say that I was by nature very nearly lazy? While I hesitated, the thought of the fire beside me as compared with a terrible struggle thru the thickets and swamps which I must pass in the face of a snowstorm, and all to doubtful victory, decided me. I replenished the fire.

An hour dragged on slowly. In reaching a decision I had not satisfied my hunger. I thought of the generous supplies at Wind Cave with a great longing, and all at once an idea occurred to me. The snow was now falling rather steadily and lay in a thin white coat everywhere. On several occasions I had seen rabbits in the woods. They could be tracked in the snow, and I might come close to one. Several hours must elapse before I could hope for deliverance; I would try my luck as a hunter in the woods about the point. Proceeding to the beach I filled my pockets with small stones by way of ammunition, and with a heavy stick for a second line of attack, I departed.

Avoiding the beech trees, whose formation was too open for me to attempt a surprise on my intended victims, I climbed up the slope into the pines and made my way along below the crest of the ridge as it swung inland. Many little hollows and tiny ravines encouraged brush growths of several varieties, and I picked my way along with eyes on the alert for any sign of life.

In this way I proceeded for nearly a mile, I should say, and without being rewarded by the sight of any living thing. Pausing on a slightly more prominent point than the others I had passed, I glanced back. The slope of the country was gentle, and of course toward the lake. On a clear day I should have been able to see for some miles, but at the moment the gently falling flakes and the mist that still hovered over the lake defied observation, and I swung along the slope again. The wind had fallen to the point where it hardly made itself felt and the heavens had been given over to the snow. The air had lost part of its chill, and I was fairly comfortable save for my feet, which were soaking from the damp under foot. By this time I had almost reached the conclusion that the rabbits had gone in for that day, at least, but still I climbed on, hoping faintly that some more venturous representative of his race might yet remain beneath his favorite bush, and so fall a victim to my skill.

And presently I swung down a rather steep declivity and came full onto a little cabin among a group of mighty trees that served to emphasize the building's smallness. A stovepipe by way of chimney issued from the roof at the rear, but no smoke hung above it. I concluded that the place was empty of any human occupant, at least. Possessed by merely a mild curiosity at finding this cabin where I had supposed there were no habitations at all, I turned toward the grove about it. As I approached I saw it was a dilapidated affair and had evidently been standing for some time. The rough slabs composing the sides were weather-beaten and gray with many winters, but the rather steeply pitched roof of the same material showed a sign of recent repair, and a rusted hasp and staple held the door in place of the ancient thong that swung in a tattered loop below. There was one window.

The iron strap boasted a padlock, but was not clasped and, drawing it from its socket, I pushed the door open, to find myself in the single room. Against the rear wall stood the rusty iron stove, and under the window a table littered with odds and ends. There were several boxes by way of stools and one chair with a broken back. In the corner was a tall, old-fashioned wardrobe, and, despite the cracked varnish and countless scratches, it was plain it had once been an article of value. The exterior was undoubtedly mahogany. One of its doors, with the glass broken, stood open and the shelves thus disclosed were bare. It struck me as being curiously out of place there, and I wondered what had brought the thing to such keeping.

The walls of the room were lined with many coats of newspapers pasted over the uneven surface, and several pages from illustrated magazines had been added by way of ornament, I suppose. A blind hung above the window. The floor was bare. The place instantly appealed to me as a far better place to spend the hours till nightfall than the open woods under the heavy snow, and I decided to make a fire. I remembered that a small stack of wood had lain at the corner of the building and I stepped outside for some. This pile was at the western side and a few feet from the window which was in that wall. As I bent over the sticks, I was startled to behold before me in the freshly fallen snow a number of footprints that I instantly knew had not been made by myself. I was almost certain they were not there when I entered five minutes previously, altho as to this I would not say for certain.

For the moment I was taken aback. Almost before I realized it had run along the wall and glanced about. There was no one in sight. The tracks went on till they reached the trees and so were lost, and there was no following them for such a poor tracker as myself, for the trees at this point were thick-branched and close together, so that as yet no snow had penetrated them. After all, there was nothing very remarkable about the discovery, I assured myself, while I tried to believe I was not startled. No doubt some chance passer-by had paused to glance in at me thru the window, and then gone on. Comforted with this theory, I turned back toward the cabin, and was about to enter when a fresh and apparently inexplicable turn of affairs presented itself. I glanced about hurriedly with a sense that very closely resembled fear. A brief but careful examination assured me that I was not mistaken. There was only one set of footprints. The tracks began just to the left of the window.

I was dumfounded. Here was a mystery indeed, and one for which it seemed there could never be any explanation. Before me the tracks began, and that was all. I am not a believer in things supernatural, and yet I own I felt a sudden thrill as I watched, all the while with a vague idea that I should presently awake and talk with knowledge upon the reality of dreams. But this was not to be. Before me was the grim reality beyond question. With something resembling a shudder I went in-

side before I remembered the wood. I returned for it and whittled some splinters so they would ignite easily—and made another discovery. The ashes in the stove were still warm, and some particles glowed a dim red as I uncovered them. And so some one had been there not so long before. Acting upon an impulse, I crossed to the window and returned, nonplused once more. The window was nailed fast and the dust of many days lay deep on the sill. No one had gone out that way, at least for a long time. So much was patent—and no more.

I was some time making a fire, for the wood was soggy and rather wet. The splinters only sputtered feebly and went out under the match. Finally I resorted to scraps of paper from the walls, and at length got a blaze. Drawing the broken chair close that I might catch the first heat, I put my soaking feet on the hearth and nursed my fire along with small particles of pine until the little iron stove was aglow.

I had been longer in the woods than I had supposed, and before the cabin was fairly warm the short fall day was drawing to a close, with the air, heavy with snow, hastening the dark. Knowing that it would require nearly half an hour's walk to take me to the beach, and that the going would be rather uncertain among the trees, I decided that it would be best to return immediately. But the warmth of the stove was tempting and I hesitated at going. I had only Roper's word for my deliverance, and by "dark" he might have meant a later hour than I supposed at first. Perhaps it would be as well, I decided, to remain a little while. The wait on the beach would be a dreary one at best, and my fire would have gone out long before this. I drew my chair closer.

The open grate with its failing coals and ever-changing lights was fascinating, and even the most frivolous wax thoughtful before firelight. The events of the day were strong on my mind, and the mystery of the tracks below the window kept recurring to me, try as I might to dismiss it. The realization that I was alone and unarmed in a deserted cabin so far from any aid was not a pleasant one. It was true that I could have left the place, but I reasoned that if harm were intended to me I was no safer elsewhere, and the woods did not possess the advantages offered by this shelter.

There was no light in the room but the fire itself. The cracks and warped joints of the old stove gleamed through and cast a sort of vague, dancing glow over the walls and the window. As the pine knots in the grate exploded with that hissing sound peculiar to them, these numerous openings would gleam white with the sudden flare, and send a legion of grotesque shapes dancing along the four walls, while the former glow repeated the performance in a quieter tone. And so faint light and dark shadow played an endless game over the dusty wall, and sent shadows disappearing into shadows on the old floor. Save the flutter of the fire and the creak of the old building, all was still around. It was coming night, I thought; the window had been shewing dark for some minutes. Scarcely conscious of my act, I glanced at it again—and my heart went cold.

Pressed against the glass was a face—a wild, terrible face it seemed to my startled brain—wide, dark eyes and a straggly beard. The head was bare, as tho the watcher had removed his hat to facilitate his view, and his unkempt hair streaked with gray fell over his temples. I sat motionless, terrified with one thought uppermost in my mind—that an attempt to escape would be useless, for this watcher was near the door than I. With an effort I turned my head, while a thousand terrible fancies took possession of me. I remember hearing a coal drop in the grate, and, in the horrible stillness, it sounded intensely loud. But still I did not look at the window for the moment. My limbs, my body even, seemed to have lost all power. With terror I recalled the tracks that began in the snow outside. At the same instant there was a sort of dull blow behind me, as tho some heavy hand had struck the wall.

Beyond control for the moment, I whirled about as muscles regained their power. The face was at the window still, altho slightly lower and strangely to one side. The eyes were no longer on me as before, but staring straight ahead at the opposite wall. Without movement I watched, terrified, for I know not how long. And still the features did not move, but retained their horrible set expression. The head had dropped slightly and bared strong yellow teeth in a sort of snarl, while the eyes seemed set and curiously drawn. It was almost as tho they looked without seeing. With a choking cry I started to my feet. That was it; I knew at last, and black, unreasoning terror came over me with the realization. Those eyes could not see the face before me was that of a dead man!

CHAPTER V.

THERE is no sensation so horrible as that of terror which you cannot control. For the moment it seemed to my disordered senses that I should go mad. This awful climax following the happenings of the day, all of them unexplainable, and the matter of the tracks in the snow almost uncanny, stunned my reasoning powers completely for the instant. The most terrible fear is the result of something we cannot understand. That was my situation. Before, upon my first glance at the window I should have sworn the face there had expression; the eyes showed life. Feeling the perspiration clammy on my brow, I forced myself to look again. There could be no doubt; it was a dead face now, whose wide eyes stared unseeing at the wall across the room. Somehow, death had come surely and swiftly in the space of a minute to this creature outside.

I fought for control over my numbed faculties, and with an effort faced the glowing hearth with my back to the window; self-possession would not come to me while I watched the horrible thing there. Mechanically, I put another stick into the little iron stove, and saw it ignite and presently throw flickering shadows once more along the wall. Some little time elapsed, and I had not moved from my place. My brain, ever conjuring with frightful fancies, pictured all sorts of possibilities, which I put back as best I might, and all the while fighting for control.

I believe I am as brave as the average, that is to say something of a coward. Most of us will rise to the unexpected occasion and do our best when events call for quick action, but the unexplainable, when terrible, makes us primitive for the moment. I was overpowered with the impulse to get away. And yet, dimly, I realized I must not do so. That was unarmed as yet. The danger to which the man at the window had succumbed had evidently not been meant for me. If I gave way to my first thought, I was lost. Such an impulse obeyed at such a moment masters one to the exclusion of all else. I knew I must go quickly. Dimly I remembered the Mouse and Roper's final words at parting. The boat was my salvation, and I must not lightly throw away this only chance.

I was perhaps more than a mile from the beach, and in the fast falling snow I must keep my head, if I would ever make the point and the little bay. With some degree of exactness I remembered my course in the afternoon, and knew the ridge back of the cabin. If followed, would take me to the beach. With a thrill I remembered that it was among the trees on the ridge that the mysterious tracks had disappeared. I had a momentary vision of specter hands reaching out to clutch at me as I passed thru the black shadows, and of vague shapes following me across the open places. Courage is at a discount against imagination prompted by a sense of reality, and the remembrance of those ghostly footprints in the snow was now strong upon me. While my education and my training combined weakly to assure me that the supernatural is impossible, I was, nevertheless, terrified. With a shudder I faced about.

But despite my fear the thing must be done. I must not make a detour, for as a result I should doubtless become lost beyond hope in the black night and the storm. Only by keeping to the apex of the ridge could I expect to return safely to the beach and the Mouse, if indeed it ever came again.

Resisting an impulse to glance at the window, I walked toward the door. Under me the aged floor creaked startlingly loud in the stillness broken only by the flicker of the fire. But at last my hand was on the latch, and I paused an instant. Outside I must turn directly to the ridge. I felt momentarily thankful that I was not forced to pass on the side where the window was. But even then there were the trees and the ghostly possibilities of the slope, and I shuddered as I opened the door. However, there was one consolation; I was leaving the dead man behind. But spirits could—I paused, and aloud said "Bosh!" rather weakly, I fancy, altho this futile defiance sounded terrifying in the stillness.

It was plain to be seen that I was thoroly unnerved, and what I did immediately afterward proved it. I glanced at the window to make sure. Everything became momentarily black before me, and the room swam past me an instant at what I saw, or rather at what I didn't see—for the window was empty; the face had disappeared!

Terrified beyond all hope at that, I leaped thru the door into the night. Imaginary hands clutched at me; almost so clearly as to be reality I saw a bearded face with exposed yellow teeth and wide staring eyes waiting for me ahead, and I swerved blindly and ran another way, only to picture the same horrible countenance among the black trees before me. I turned once more, and found myself climbing. At that some shred of reason returned to me, and I knew dully that this was the ridge, and so I turned at the top and ran mechanically along the downward slope of the apex.

The snowflakes closed in about me, and I could not see a yard, yet with outstretched hands I stumbled on. Tree trunks appeared before me as if by magic, and many times I fell over bushes and protruding stones that I did not see until too late. As I drew away from the immediate vicinity of the cabin my fear lessened somewhat, until I was sufficiently self-possessed to keep the trail. Several inches of snow now lay on the ground, and my clothes were heavy with it already. Whenever I came in contact with a bush or touched a small tree trunk ever so lightly, a shower of fine particles came down upon me. My shoes, which had become nearly dry at the cabin, were once more soaking, and every sharp projection underfoot caused me to wince as my feet rapidly became bruised from the unavoidable contact.

After some little time I was forced to pause an instant to regain my wind. I was now nearly myself once more, and, while still frightened somewhat and altogether puzzled at the events of the day, had collected myself so far as to view the situation with a certain degree of calmness. Nevertheless, I own that I glanced about nervously at the slightest sound, and attempted to penetrate the darkness ahead while I walked, as tho half expecting some creature of my imagination to become materialized.

But nothing of an alarming nature appeared to confront me, nor did any sound not natural to the wood come to me, as I pushed on thru the black trunks against ghostly backgrounds. And so, after a while, I heard the murmur of the lake below me. At the last slope before the beach itself, I turned off and went sliding and stumbling down among the beeches and the thick underbrush, clutching at whatever offered in the way of a support, and finally came to the level beneath without accident. With the gravel of the shore itself crunching under my sodden shoes, I dismissed all fear of becoming lost, and hurried along just out of reach of the ripples in the direction of the Mouse, if indeed it would be there.

CHAPTER VI.

FIFTY yards farther on and my rather vague expectations were realized, as I made out the faint shape of my little craft almost where I had left it that morning. I stumbled across a rope, and, following it with my hands, found the anchor lying in the sand. In haste to be gone from this dreadful place, I caught it up and splashed into the water. The bow of the Mouse lay slightly imbedded, and it required considerable effort to push her off. Once free, I crawled up out of two feet of water onto her deck, and steadying myself with a hand on the mast, stepped aft. As I did so she gave a delicious little roll at my weight on her beam, and I could have spoken my joy aloud. The somber line of woods beyond the beach held no terror for me now.

After some fumbling over the lashings I got the oars free, and moved the Mouse slowly out of the little bay, for there was no wind in the shelter of the point. On the open lake I ran the sail up, and with the faint breeze fanning my cheek, slid slowly thru the black water. With no small degree of satisfaction I noted that the fury of the snow was gone. The flakes were not coming in so solid a formation, but scattered and with greater intervals between them. Overhead, a few stars were coming out, faintly to be sure, but in rapidly increasing numbers, and I had no doubt that the weather would presently be clear. By the time the western shore was an indistinct line behind me, the starlight was considerable, and best of all, a fresh breeze had sprung up from the north, that sent the boat along at fair speed as she heeled slightly from it and shot up a flutter of bubbles at her counter. There was still some wave action after the storm of the day, and the Mouse nosed thru the water with resounding little slaps on her side as she met it. I crouched low in the cockpit, for the wind was cold, and realized how hungry I was, while the boat went on under the stars.

Out there on the water, with the gentle thrust of my craft under me, the affair in the wood and my experience at the cabin lost some of the vividness, curiosity and terror they had possessed at first. That is, all but the horrible face at the window. It required but little imagination for me to see that again, and I could not repress a shudder as I thought of those eyes. And yet when I had looked the last time it was undoubtedly gone. One could almost believe the whole affair a hideous nightmare were it not for the remembrance of my terror. That had been too real to be explained away by such a statement; there was no doubt but that it had all been startlingly real. As for any thought of explanation, I dismissed it along with the footprints that began where it was not possible they could begin. I believed that I had that day witnessed the impossible; a person who went away without having come and a dead man who had apparently returned to life. Accounts I had read and even wild flights of horror in fiction appeared tepid when compared to my adventure. What would my friends say when I told them, and I thought of my enviable position. And then I knew I should not tell them, for they would not believe me. Instead, they would appear shocked and send a solemn deputation to count my empty wine bottles. History shows that wild tales, however true, are not accepted by the world; there have been too many poor liars.

Altho I had a fair idea of my course, and watched the Pole star as a general guide, I occasionally raised sufficiently to obtain a view of the eastern shore of the lake for a more exact bearing. The Mouse was sliding thru the water at perhaps three miles an hour, or thereabouts, and so it was not such a long time before the eastern side was in fair view. As I approached, I saw I was too far to the north, and so put about slightly to presently come within view of the rather sharply pointed hill that rises to the rear of the cottage and other buildings at Wind Cave. With the breeze on her quarter the Mouse whipped along at a fair rate, and it was not long before I made out the boathouse solemn on its row of piling.

The air had the sting of genuine winter in it. I knew if the wind fell and the lake became still, there might be ice in the morning, especially in the more sheltered places. But the task of getting the boat up the incline and into the house was in itself very nearly impossible for a single pair of hands. I must risk the ice and leave the Mouse in the water for the night, at least.

Rounding the point, I slipped silently across the smooth pool in its shelter and let the sheet go, for the boat's momentum would carry it in. Her nose struck the piling gently, and I was out and had made her fast in a moment, while the thought of supper occupied me completely. Running up the little pier, I was before the boathouse door. It was ajar. At the moment this struck me as being curious; I had remembered snapping the lock that morning. However, I shoved it wide and entered, pushing it to behind me. As I did so my hand encountered a hollow just above the latch that was unfamiliar to me. I noticed, also, that the edge was splintered and sharp particles stung my numb fingers. I fumbled for a match and drew it along the wall. The light confirmed my suspicions; the door had been forced. Even as the match flickered and died out, I felt a sudden terrible grip at my throat, and I was borne backward against the wall and, after a brief struggle, to the floor. A wheezy breath, heavy with vile whisky, fanned my cheek, and a gruff voice muttered something unintelligible. There was a short silence, and then I felt some soft substance at my face and the sickening odor of chloroform in my nostrils, and consciousness left me.

This mysterious story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very strange happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. It costs you only $1.00. Be wise and attend to this today.

The Home Town.

"Let me give you a tip on a little matter of wisdom," remarked the traveling salesman, as he pulled his chair close to that of the wise-looking man in the hotel barber shop.

"Let's have it!" said the wise man. "I am inured to hardship."

"Well," continued the salesman, "you heard those last two customers getting into that argument while they were paying the cashier, didn't you? You saw them begin as friends and end as if they were going to head for the nearest alley? That all came from their getting personal about their old home towns."

"I heard them talking about the respective merits of Bumperville and Yazoo and some more jerkwater places. They can't have much on their minds or they wouldn't waste their time on such trivialities. Especially that town of Yazoo. Of all the forsaken jumping-off places that was ever put on the map it is Yazoo. Yazoo is——"

"See here, sir, if it's all the same to you I wish you wouldn't pass any uncomplimentary remarks about Yazoo."

"Why? What's Yazoo to you? I know what I'm talking about. Yazoo is the limit. The people who have to live in Yazoo ought to get a bonus from the United States Government for doing it."

"So that's what you think of Yazoo, eh? Yazoo is the prettiest little burg that ever had a postoffice and a siding. What did they ever do to you in Yazoo that you should talk that way about it? I wouldn't care if you panned a town like Pickleford, Ypsilanti, Dogwood or Sidville."

"That's where we differ about towns. You see I travel a great deal. And when I make Yazoo I have to put up at the gosh-durndest one-horse institution with a rotten front porch full of men whose mouths bulge with quids, and a livery stable on one side of the place and a flour and feed store on the other."

"You've described it, sir; you've described it, but I wouldn't call that a blemish. That's Tibbin's livery, ain't it? Gosh, when I remember the fun we had sitting among those old coaches and riding on the back of Old Chief to the water trough in the yard, and cracking Bill's whips. Why, when I think of it——"

"Say, you talk as if you know the place."

"Yes, sir, I do. It is my home town. That's why I love it."

"Well, it's mine, too, bust yer hide. That's why I went away."

If a woman says things to your face she is disagreeable; if she says them behind your back she is deceitful; if she says nothing—but, of course, she never does.

A Baseball Detective

Or, The Diamond Trophy

By Lloyd Thacher

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CHAPTER VIII.
THE CLEW IN THE DIRT.

JUST about the time the stout man, Hank, and his friend George were looking at the diamond trophy in the former's apartment, and before Hank had dined with the Bossess, Les Lang roused himself from his study of the dirt he had carried from beneath the clubhouse, passed from the closet where he had deposited it, and locked the door behind him.

His apartment, tho small and modest, was most attractive, and now he seated himself and devoted ten minutes to deep thought, having in mind the imprints on the dirt that he had been so careful to bring to his home.

The young man had a mental picture of the lines traced in the dirt stamped on his memory. He knew the exact sizes of the two squares outlined there, and it was from these lines that he hoped to trace the man who had stolen—or found—as the criminal probably would put it—his diamond trophy.

Moreover, he had taken careful note of the tracks made by the man who had been beneath the clubhouse. The shoes he had worn were broad at the toes, and the nails at the edge of one of the soles had projected ever so little—the shoes had evidently been half-soled.

But foot tracks were of little value in a big city, and Lang relied more on the other clew—the imprints in the dirt. During the ten minutes that he pondered over the situation, his thoughts ran thus:

"The trail begins from that little door in the fence that leads from underneath the clubhouse. If it were daylight now I might try to see where the man's tracks led, but I would lose them the minute I hit the pavement. If, now, I had had a man watching that door—"

Suddenly his face lighted up.

"Reddy!" came the exclamation.

Les Lang jumped to his feet, donned a light overcoat and hurried from the apartment, leaving word with the elevator boy that he would be back, probably, by ten o'clock.

He ran up the steps of the elevated road three at a time, and sped uptown in a train to the station nearest the ball park. Alighting here, he walked two blocks crosstown, and knocked at the door of a little shanty set far back from the street. The door was opened by a diminutive chap whose fiery red hair seemed to call out.

"Gee, Mr. Lang!" cried the little fellow.

"Reddy," returned Les, "perhaps you can help me a lot. I want to ask you a few questions."

"Gee, Mr. Lang," exclaimed Reddy, "but youse did give 'em the stuff terday. Gee! Soitainly youse had everyt'ing on de ball."

"Reddy," smiled Les, "I know that you usually hang around the grounds after a game and watch us come out. Did you do that today?"

"Sa, bo," returned Reddy, "do youse t'ink I'd miss it terday? Wot do youse t'ink I am?"

"Did you see us all come out?" asked Les.

"Naw," came the disgusted reply. "Some of youse sneaked out—I dunno where. But I watched just de same."

"You know that little door that leads into the place underneath the clubhouse where they used to keep tools and such?" came Lang's anxious inquiry.

Reddy began to laugh heartily at this question. His bright, eager face reflected great amusement at some recollection.

"You know it?" repeated Lang.

"Soitainly I knows it," replied Ready, between peals of laughter. "An' youse orter seed wot happened to a feller that come out o' that door today."

"Not one of the players?"

"Naw—he looked sort o' like Gaffney, but a fan like me wouldn't have took him fer Gaffney," and again Reddy laughed heartily. "They did, dough."

"He came out of that little door?" asked Les, in eagerness. "No one uses that door now—how did he happen to come from there?"

"Search me," came the reply. "But he soitainly did have a good time, I guess. A big fat feller grabbed him an' tol' him he was one o' the players, an' carted him off down to a saloon wid de hull crowd joinin' in. Dat's all I seed o' him. But wot kin I tell you—how kin I help you, Mr. Lang? I'd like ter pay back fer dat money youse give mudder wen we wuz hard up."

"Never mind about that money, Reddy," smiled Les. "Tell me, the fellow you describe—who was taken to a saloon by a stout man and others—you are sure he was not one of the boys? And was he the only one you saw come out of that door?"

"Say, Mr. Lang," said Reddy, earnestly, "do youse t'ink I'd try to fool you? An' do youse t'ink dat I don't know de players? Why, I've watched ter see 'em come out every game this year. An' dat feller is de only guy I seen come out o' dat little door fer two months."

"Thank you, Reddy. Now tell me what saloon the crowd went into."

"Dorgan's place," came the quick reply.

"And, of course, you couldn't follow them in there?"

"Course not—youse taught me never ter go into one o' dem places even w'en I grow up. An,' Mr. Lang, wot youse says goes wid dis child."

Les Lang smiled at the compliment, and left, having made Reddy a little present for his information.

"Dorgan's place" was not far away, and Les entered the now deserted saloon a few minutes later. The waiter who had attended to the stout man's crowd earlier in the evening was now tending bar, and was the only man in charge, as business was usually dull in the evening in this far uptown resort.

He recognized Les Lang at once, and a whisky bottle was immediately placed on the bar with an invitation to take a drink.

"Not tonight," said Les, smiling. "But I will have something soft."

"What are you doing way up here at this time?" asked the waiter. "That certainly was a wonderful game, Les."

"For certain reasons I have a bit of curiosity about a man who was escorted in here after the game today, who had been mistaken for Gaffney, our pinch hitter, I believe," responded Les. "Do you remember any such man?"

"I should say I do," replied the waiter. "And I said to myself at the time that he sure wasn't one of the players. Who ever saw a ball player in the big league wearing a pair of pants with patches on the knees?"

Les Lang could not repress an exclamation at this question. It was so exactly what he had hoped for, but could scarcely expect.

"Patches on his trousers?" he repeated. Then he took from his pocket a piece of paper and pencil and drew two little near-squares on the paper. They were of a peculiar shape. He showed the paper to the waiter and looked up inquiringly.

"Were they of that shape, do you remember?" he asked.

"How in the world did you know?" asked the astonished waiter. "Yes, that's them exactly. I took particular notice after he got drunk—they were funny-shaped patches."

"And was there anything else about the man or those with him that you noticed?" asked Lang, quickly.

"Only that the others got fighting drunk," came the reply. "There was a fat man that seemed to—well, he said some things about you that the rest didn't like. It looked to me as tho he was trying to pick a fight."

"And the man with the patches—the man they took for Gaffney—describe him."

The waiter did his best to give a good description of Mike, but did not get very far. The patches on the trousers were the things that had caught his attention.

"He got awful drunk almost as soon as he came in," he said. "It wasn't so very long ago that he staggered out. If you want to find him I wouldn't be surprised if you located him at the nearest police station."

Before Les left he had obtained a fairly good description of the stout man. Not that he had any idea that Hank—as the reader knows him—had anything to do with the diamond trophy, but merely to obtain all the information he could.

Presently he stepped to the door of the saloon and looked up and down the street.

"If I were very drunk," he mused, "which way would I turn involuntarily—what would I do?"

The electric lights from saloons and stores and in the street made the walk easy to be seen, and for five minutes Les pondered. Just south of the saloon in the entrance of which he stood the stores were built solidly. There was no break in the block. But to the north the country was more open, this being the outskirts of the city.

"I surely would not seek the busiest part of the city," was Lang's thought. "If I were drunk and staggering I would probably long for a place to lie down. I wonder, now?"

He turned to the north and walked along slowly. The saloon he had left was the last one on the avenue—the first one for a person coming from the ball park as Mike and his party had come. Just north of it was a big vacant lot, dark now, as no electric lights bordered the street at that point.

"And," Lang's mental action continued, "I wouldn't be particular where I lay down, under those circumstances, as long as it was somewhere where I wouldn't be apt to be disturbed."

He turned from the walk, and as he did so he felt the soft earth under his feet. He stopped. Now he turned back to the end of the last building in the block and lighted a match.

"Carrying my deductions a little farther," he mused, "I'd be apt to get off the street just as quickly as I could. And by the same token my feet would leave prints in this soft earth. Here goes."

Now Les Lang began a thoro examination of the ground at the point where the saloon building stopped, the vacant lot and the soft earth began. He was a persevering sort of person, and half an hour's search did not take away his determination.

And at the end of that time he was rewarded! There appeared in the soft dirt the prints of the same shoes—the shoes that had been half-soled and from which the nails protruded slightly. But this was just the beginning of his search. With a sigh of satisfaction he began his walk thru the vacant lot into which the tracks led. The tracks themselves were soon lost in the rank grass, but that was of little importance.

An hour passed. The thing was not so easy of accomplishment as it seemed.

"Probably he has slept it off and gone away," was the thought that came to the searcher.

But just as this discouraging aspect of the case occurred to him, there loomed up against the sky the bulky figure of a man. It was coming straight toward Les, and its size seemed awesome in the dim light.

Lang drew back close to the building near which he had been searching. On

A Wise Move

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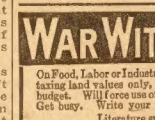

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came the man, walking erect with no sign of staggering. As he advanced there seemed to the watcher to be something familiar about the way the man carried himself, and Les peered intently at him thru the gloom. The nearer the other came the firmer became the conviction in Les' mind that he had seen him before.

All at once the approaching figure stopped, leaned forward toward the unseen ball player, and the latter could hear the man's heavy breathing. At the same instant Les, moving just a bit, felt his foot go downward. A hasty investigation, made while the man near him was motionless, showed Lang that there was an opening in the ground at this point, close to the building and probably running into the cellar beneath the saloon. Mentally he noted the fact as he faced the approaching figure once more.

With three quick steps the man stood close to Lang and peered into his face. To Les came the odor of liquor, even before he was able to see who or what sort of a man he had encountered. Then, from the other, came a gasp.

"Les Lang!" was the half cry.

And with the exclamation he made a dodge as tho to get away from the young pitcher. But Lang had played football. He dove head first for the fellow's knees, but in the darkness missed a firm tackle. His shoulder, however, struck the other with such force that the man reeled back against the building. The next thing that Lang heard was a sort of disappearing cry of rage.

His attempted tackle had left him prostrate on the ground. Quickly he picked himself up and darted in the direction whence had come the sound. There was no one in sight. Hurriedly he ran about, close to the spot whence he had made his leap, but the big man was nowhere to be found.

Then he remembered the hole in the ground. It took him but a second to locate it, and without a moment's hesitation he dropped down, down, at an angle of forty-five degrees. In two seconds he struck something hard. He picked himself up in the darkness; stood motionless and listened. There came the sound of some one moving at a little distance from him. Thither he rushed, and the sudden impact of his body against another's almost threw him to the ground.

But it did not. His arms circled the body of the man against whom he had rushed in this unceremonious manner, and he exerted all his strength to throw him.

The man would have been no match for Les Lang in the light of day—so great was the young man's skill. But at the rough-and-tumble fight of the brute underworld he was a master. Kicking, gouging, biting and all the rest of the evil devices of the underworld were at his finger-tips. And he used them all!

Backward and forward they swayed. The big man had broken Les' fight hold, and was now using his feet in a manner worthy of those who make foot fighting a practice. Les' body was aching already from the well-planted blows the big man had inflicted, but there was no more thought of giving in than there was of flying thru the floor of the cellar where the fierce battle was taking place.

And three times Lang had caught the man with hard blows to the face. It was a gamble each time he let drive, whether or not he would land on a vital spot, but it was a necessary gamble. From his antagonist's heavy breathing the young man knew that these blows had told.

The odor of stale whisky, breathed into Lang's face, was making him sick.

"If it affects me like that," thought Les, smiling in spite of the desperate encounter in which he was engaged, "I wonder how he feels with all that stuff inside him?"

Thud! Thud! Thud! Flesh against flesh! The kicks and gouges of the big man became weaker and weaker as Lang again and again succeeded in landing swinging blows with the fist that had humbled the Kilties that very day. But the big man put up a game fight. He knew that, probably, this was his last chance for the freedom that meant so much to him.

How he cursed the whisky that had brought him to this pass! He forgot, even, the diamond trophy that had been stolen from him—this fact he had ascertained in his first sober moments.

So he kicked and gouged and bit and struck, but after half an hour of the fiercest combat Lang had ever known, the big man sank to the floor—a bleeding wreck. Lang himself was pretty weak, but he had strength enough to bind the wrists and ankles of the late antagonist while he made his way to the floor above.

Here the waiter, still on duty, was almost struck dumb at the sight of Les Lang, celebrated pitcher, emerging from the cellar of the saloon, his face puffed and his clothing torn.

"You'll have to help me," said Les, after he had telephoned to the police station for the wagon. "I don't know for sure, but I think that I have that chap downstairs—the chap with the patches on his trousers."

They descended, and together carried the big man up the stairs and into the light. Lang's first glance at the fellow brought one surprise and one feeling of satisfaction. Now for the first time he could see the man's face.

"It's Mike," he exclaimed.

"And it's the man with the patches on his pants," added the waiter. "What do you want him for?"

Before answering Lang examined the patches on the almost unconscious Mike.

They were identical in shape with the little squares outlined on the dirt Lang had taken to his apartment. A peculiar thing about the patches, and the reason that they had left such plain imprints on the soft, firm earth, was that the edges where they had been sewed into the trousers were protruding. Evidently the patches were the work of an amateur. And Les was glad of that.

By the time the police wagon arrived, Mike had opened his eyes and was looking at Les Lang sadly. He knew his game had been played—and feeling the way he did at this moment, he did not much care. On the way to the station in the wagon, he gave short replies to Les' questions about the trophy.

"Don't know nothin' about it," he kept insisting.

"Very well," replied Lang, "I'll wait till your brain is a little clearer and you will be able to see how important it is for you to tell me. I've searched you and you haven't got it. Possibly you buried it in that vacant lot—if you weren't too drunk. But if it is there it will keep."

They reached the station, and Mike was placed in a cell. Lang, known to the sergeant, had a short conversation with that official, after which he took a taxi for his apartment to dress his many bruises.

Once inside his comfortable quarters he sank into a deep chair with a sigh of relief.

"I've got Grafton and Mike," he mused, "but they haven't as yet brought me any nearer my aim. Oh," and the strong, courageous man almost cried out in his dejection, "what does one baseball victory amount to—what do the cheers of the crowd mean to me as long as I have failed to bring safety—and peace—to straighten out the tragedy of lives?"

At this moment, just as the clock on the mantel struck the hour of half-past ten, Les Lang's telephone bell rang. Slowly he rose and took down the receiver.

From the other end of the wire came the soft voice of a woman.

"Is this Les Lang?" was the question asked.

CHAPTER IX.
AN INTENSE SITUATION.

THE detective who had been left to watch the tug on which Mike and Brag made their escape messed things up. He beat along the bank of the river as best he could, but being as bright as a lead dollar, lost track of the little boat as soon as it began to steam among the many similar craft that plied about the waters near the wharf on which the two criminals alighted.

His partner, who had gone in search of a motor boat to aid him in his chase of Mike and Brag, found what he was after, but once aboard, and directing the search, could not locate the tug for the good reason that he was unfamiliar with boats of this description and, once out among them, they all looked alike to him.

Thus it was that the two detectives into whose care Les Lang had placed the duty of watching the death shack and capturing any of the gang who should come there (for he had done this, as the criminals had already surmised), bungled their job and finally gave it up.

Brag, after leaving Mike—whose love of whisky finally brought him into custody as we have seen—was left to his own devices. He was of that low order of criminal lacking the slightest trace of moral courage, and as the Boss had told him to lie low, he frequented the resorts which appealed to him until, like all the rest of the people in the city who had any sporting inclinations, he went to the final game of the world's series between the Gray Colts and the Kilties.

Needless to say, he did not see Mike or the Bossess at or near the grounds, but by the time he had something to eat he had gained courage enough to go and see the Boss and report on the things that had happened at the death shack and on the tug.

Brag found the white-haired Boss pacing up and down the floor of his luxurious apartment, a frown on his brow and his hands thrust deep in his pockets. It was evident that the strong man's temper held him in its power. He listened to Brag's tale, and as he listened the frown deepened.

"Les Lang again," he said, with an oath. "I swear that another day shall not come without my having a final word with that man. While he lives I can have no peace." Then, suddenly: "Where is Mike?"

Neither knew that at this moment the big Mike was sleeping off his intoxication in the vacant lot near the saloon where he had been entertained; nor could either have the second-sight to read that in the near future Mike would be reposing in the police station jail whither Les Lang took him shortly after this time.

"I don't know where Mike is," replied Brag.

"And to make matters worse," almost roared the Boss, "my wife is not at her apartment."

Up and down, up and down the man paced, while Brag looked on in wonder. He had seen this leader of whom they all were afraid in a temper before, but never had he seen him when he was so completely beside himself. The pound, pound of his feet on the heavy rug seemed to accentuate his anger.

"Come with me," he commanded presently.

They left the apartment and were carried quickly in a taxi that had been waiting to the home of the Bossess. The white-haired man fairly brushed the elevator boy aside as they emerged at the designated floor. He fitted a key into the lock of the woman's apartment and called at once for her maid.

"Where is your mistress?" the man inquired severely of the girl.

"I—I don't know," came the frightened reply. The man's manner was enough to scare one less timid than this girl.

"Yes, you do know," came the Boss' declaration. "Think, girl, and think quickly. Give me some idea where she went. She isn't in the habit of going out and not leaving any word for me."

"She—she got a telephone call a little while ago," stammered the maid. "Then she dressed quickly, in an evening gown, and went out without telling me where."

"But you must have heard her say something over the 'phone," insisted the Boss. "She must have said something that will give me an idea where she went."

For a moment the maid thought deeply. Then her face lightened. "I did hear her say something about Pector's," was her reply.

"Ah!" ejaculated the man. Then he turned to Brag.

"I'm going to get Les Lang tonight," he said, "and I will probably want your help. You go to your own place and stay there till I call you up. Try to get hold of Mike if you can without going out. Now go."

When the Boss was in this frame of mind his subordinates did not wait about obeying his commands. Brag rushed from the apartment and to the street. Nor did he pause long before reaching his own room.

The Boss scribbled a little note to his wife—in case he should not find her—and gave it to the maid with instructions to present it to her mistress as soon as she should come in. Then he, too, hurried from the room.

"Les Lang," he muttered as he was lowered in the elevator to the street floor. "If he were like most men who have just pitched a wonderful game, and become the idol of the city, he would be out having a good time this night. But the fellow is too wise. I'll bet that, when I want him, I'll find him in his own apartment, asleep."

The Boss was bound for Pector's. All thru his short married life he had felt, in his subconscious mind, but never admitted to himself, that the woman he had married possessed attributes and sensibilities that were beyond his essentially criminal mind. And this knowledge had increased the natural jealousy of the man. Never had he found the Bossess in any act of disloyalty to him, but never had he been able to free his mind of suspicion of her. He had been clever enough to cover up this feeling, but it was there all the same.

And now for the first time since he had known her she had taken upon herself the privilege of going away without leaving any message for him. This very act had played havoc with the strong man. As he passed out to the street he scarcely knew himself. For the first time in his life he did not trust his ability to act with calculating reason. He felt the necessity of a stimulant to restore his physical being to its customary normal condition.

He dismissed the taxi that had been waiting and decided to walk to Pector's, with difficulty restraining his eagerness to find her and solve the mystery of her strange action. This he forced himself to do.

The brilliantly lighted thorofare on which he found himself after an hour's walk offered many distractions to one whose mind was free from trouble, but these sights did not affect the Boss. The nearer he came to Pector's the greater became his excitement and the more unstrung he grew.

He dropped into a cafe to get a drink. Like all men of his type, he thought this was the panacea for everything. He sought a quiet corner, on a leather-covered settee, in the finely appointed place, and ordered a stiff drink. The waiter brought it and he was about to raise it to his lips, when he noticed for the first time (so oblivious to his surroundings had he been) a man sitting in the darkest corner of the little recess, leaning over the table and examining something.

The little object at which the man was looking lay on the table in front of him, and now, as the man struck a match and lighted a cigarette, the glow of the tiny flame was reflected brilliantly by the object at which he gazed.

And that object! It was a pin, a diamond, with two pearls, one above and one below, and a cat's-eye at one side of the diamond. It was the exact duplicate of the pin worn that night by the Bossess, and which had informed the stout man, Hank, that she was a member of the criminal order which now consisted of but three persons.

The instant the Boss' eyes rested on this little pin, he lost all thought even of his wife. He glanced at the man who was so intent upon an examination of it there in the dim light. He turned to the man and asked him for a match, taking a cigar from his pocket at the same time.

The stranger looked up, smiled and handed the Boss the required article. In the light of the match, the pin gleamed sinister, as it seemed. The stranger glanced at the Boss; saw an intelligent-looking individual, and, under the sociable atmosphere of the place, spoke.

"That's the funniest-looking pin I ever saw," he said, handing it to the Boss. The latter took and examined it carefully.

"It is unique," he agreed.

"Why any jeweler should make it one-sided like that," the stranger went on, "I can't see. One cat's-eye on one side makes it lopsided. And it is plain that there never was one on the other side."

The Boss handed the pin back, but continued the conversation. They had several drinks together, all the time discussing queerly made pieces of jewelry they had seen at different times.

Finally the stranger, attaching no special importance to the pin, gave the information, unconsciously, for which the Boss had been waiting.

"Yes," said the stranger, "I picked it up the other day in the Cryon apartments—in the rooms of a friend of mine and I've forgotten to return it to him. Hank sure wonders where it is, I bet. Probably there is some sentiment con-

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nected with a queer piece of jewelry like this."

"Hank; the Cryon apartments," was the mental note made by the Boss.

He rose and said good night to the stranger.

"Walking up the street?" inquired that person. "I'll join you."

There seemed to be no way to avoid the man's company, and the two left the place, turning in the direction of Pector's, but a block away.

The Boss was wondering how he could get rid of the other, as they reached the glaring entrance to the celebrated restaurant. But his thoughts were interrupted by an exclamation from his companion. The man stepped forward quickly and stood by the side of a man standing on the curb, hat in hand, watching a retreating taxi.

"Hello, Hank!" cried the man. "What in the world are you doing out here bareheaded, like a kid?"

The stout man turned and smiled at his friend. It was George—the individual who had helped him that day in his business with Mike in the saloon—who had been sitting with the Boss discussing the strange pin.

And before Hank answered, George took from his waistcoat, where he had placed it, the pin in question and handed it to the stout man.

"I found it on the floor of your apartment the other day after you had gone out," he said, "and have forgotten to return it to you. What is it?"

From Hank's mind, temporarily, passed all thought of the Bossess, whose departure he had just watched, in his eagerness to clutch the pin—the emblem of the order that meant everything to him. He glanced about quickly to see if any one had noticed the transfer of the pin.

"Thanks, George," he said under his breath. "I had missed it."

Not a single word or gesture of the meeting had been missed by the Boss, who stood but a few feet away. And when he saw George hand the pin to Hank, and the latter's reception of it, he fairly darted forward.

"Won't you introduce me to your friend?" he said to the man with whom he had been sitting so long in the cafe. "I believe I did not tell you my name—Alfred Alberts."

"And this is Hank Franklin," said George.

The two men shook hands. It was a peculiar handshake, lasting much longer than customary. Into Hank's eyes came a look, first of incredulity, then of wonder and gladness, as he held the Boss' hand and felt the grip of the order represented by the pin.

And the Boss! At last he had found the third living member of the once powerful band of criminals whose brains lifted them far above the ordinary run of those who lived by the breaking of the law. Here, indeed, was a man whom he knew he could trust—and he needed such a man at this minute.

The same feeling was Hank's, and his expression showed something of that feeling. George stood by, surprised at the evident earnestness of the greeting between the two apparent strangers.

"Will you wait for me a minute, Mr. Franklin?" asked the Boss, knowing well that any request of his, at that moment, would be obeyed by this new-found brother in high crime.

"Certainly, Mr. Alberts," was the reply.

"I want to step in Pector's and telephone," returned the Boss.

He entered the restaurant and looked hastily thru the dining-room. The Bossess was not there. Then he inquired of the man at the door if the private rooms were occupied, and received the information that at that moment they were all empty, the rush after the theater not having begun, and the early diners having departed.

For just a moment the Boss stood beside one of the telephone booths and pondered. For the moment his thoughts left the men outside; left Les Lang and his determination concerning him, and were busy with the woman he loved.

Presently he shook his head, and his mental words were determined.

"She will keep," they ran, "while Les Lang will not. And tonight I have a man I can rely on to show brains to help me. Now for Les Lang."

He went outside and joined George and the stout man. The communication that passed between them was not in spoken words, but was evidently understood by Hank, for he said, after a moment's silence: "I know you have something for me to help you with tonight. If you need another, let my friend George come with us. I can vouch for him."

Wonderful the trust one member of the order placed in a brother. The Boss, accustomed to lead and suggest every plan of action, now relied absolutely on the words of the stout man.

"I'm glad to have help," he said. Then, aside to Hank: "It's Les Lang! I've got to get him tonight. Now that I have found you and you have found me—the only two men left in the order—we will, of course, combine forces."

Hank halted in his tracks at the mention of the great pitcher. In a flash there came to his mind all sorts of reasons why it would be well for him, personally, to have the young man out of the way. Just how much should he tell this new-found brother? Could he be connected in any way with the woman he had just left and whom he worshiped? She was the third member, but did this white-haired man know her?

They were in a drug store now, whence the Boss was telephoning Brag to meet him at the door of Les Lang's apartment house. They had long since learned his address when he was in the city.

And all the time Hank, the stout man, was thinking deeply. One thing was certain. His oath in the order, and the death that would surely come to him if he did not heed this brother-member's call now, compelled him to do as the white-haired man asked. Moreover, he was glad to have a hand in the destruction of the man whose diamond trophy was his gift to that wonderful woman. It would make the present all the more remarkable. He decided to hold his tongue.

It took them but a few minutes to reach the house where Les Lang lived. Brag was waiting for them. They entered, and the Boss, smiling in great good nature apparently, told the elevator boy that they would go up by the stairs, as they were friends of Mr. Lang and wanted to surprise him.

Just outside his door the Boss drew a revolver and stepped close to it. The others were right behind him. The door stood ajar!

His hand on the trigger of his pistol, the Boss gave the door a quick shove and stepped into the room, followed by Hank, George and Brag.

There before them, her hands clasped in the strong hands of Les Lang, her eyes gazing up into his, stood the Bossess.

This thrilling story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

Mistaken Identity.

"Hungry little mites!" murmured the senior nurse, as a prolonged wail, in chorus, but not in unison, came from the hospital nursery. "They are ringing the dinner bell in concert. Come, Miss Holden, take Baby Decker to its mother. Room 67. Hurry, dear."

The little nurse approached the double line of wire baskets with trepidation. Only that morning she had been present at a difficult operation. She was still trembling.

"What room did you say, Miss Martin?" she repeated, but the senior nurse was already at the end of the hall, hastening on a new errand.

"Ooh, honey, don't cry so, I'll find your muzzie for you! Come on, baby!" said the little nurse. She hurried down the hall, coddling the little one. At the door of room 76 she paused. The patient within was speaking.

"I would know my baby anywhere," Mrs. Meckering was saying, inside. "The prettiest light blue eyes, the tiny fingers so delicately molded, the little round head—yes, dear friends, a mother always knows her own."

"But they look so much alike," came the voice of a girl friend, one of half a dozen who were enraptured by Mrs. Meckering's description of her offspring.

"Babies are just as different from each other as you, Alice, are from Hazel, or Martha is from Florence," continued the voice of Mrs. Meckering. "Yes, come in——"

The little nurse had ventured a timid knock. She now glided noiselessly toward the bed. The group of young women parted.

"Your little son is hungry, madam," she explained.

"My dear little baby," began Mrs. Meckering. There was a chorus of "Ohs!"

"Isn't he a darling!" exclaimed one of the girls. "How can a baby be so pretty!"

"The sweetest thing I ever——"

The mother beamed. The baby became intent on taking its meal. The little nurse slipped out of the group of devoted admirers into the hall. She beheld the senior nurse at the entrance to the nursery, and saw her beckon.

"And now," said the senior nurse, pleasantly, "here is another hungry little mite. This is Robert Meckering. Take him to room 76, please."

"Oh, Miss Martin——" stammered the little nurse, catching her breath.

* * *

His Argument.

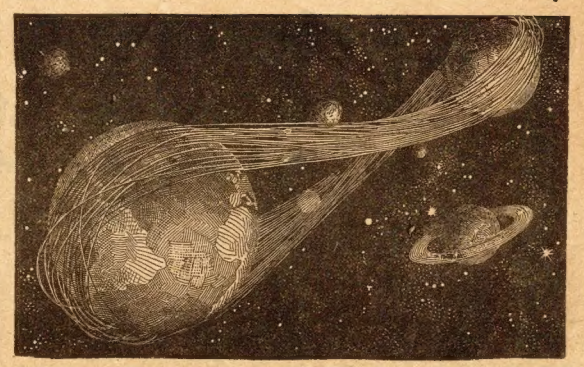
Oh, Ebenezer Waterskin was in great form at the temperance meeting as he held forth on the glories of teetotalism!

"Listen, my friends!" he cried. "If you desire a long and happy life, then shun the drink as you would shun the smallpox!"

At this a well-bitten old fellow at the back of the hall sprang up.

"Don't believe him, boys! Look at me! I'm 65 today, sound in wind and limb, hearty and happy, and I've been a hard drinker all my life!"

"Ah," cried the lecturer, "but if you'd been a teetotaler you'd have been 90 by now!"



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Comrades of the Sword

Or, The Seven-pointed Star

By William H. Manning

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CHAPTER IV.

THE TRAITOR.

WE WAITED for Shanton to return, but hours passed without any sign, tho there was renewed stir in the village. Soldiers passed and repassed, and there was much display with the cannon that fronted on the plaza, smaller arms being numerous, too. One of the soldiers who rode near immediately became the object of my intense hatred, for he was mounted on my beloved Pluto. It was good to know that my noble horse was alive, but lucky for the Mexican that I was not within reach of him.

After some hours Governor Armijo came again, and I had my first view of him. He was a tall, portly man of rather superior appearance, but we were not now inclined to give heed to outside show. Without mentioning Shanton, and with but little of the suavity of his first call, he said he was come to search us for whatever might be detrimental to Mexican interests, and a soldier did his bidding.

The search was not minute enough to bring to light the gold I had previously concealed, nor the seven-pointed star, and our loose coins were ignored, but when my passport was revealed Armijo spoke sharply.

"Here!" he exclaimed.

Receiving the paper he read slowly, and when he finished I spoke.

"Your excellency," I said, pleasantly, "you will see that the passport gives me leave to go and come freely in both New and Old Mexico."

"Does it?" he returned coldly.

"Yes, senor. You will see, further, that I had it from the Mexican vice consul at New Orleans. I suppose being a travel[illegible]. No doubt I shall soon be able to thank you for my fredom."

He smiled in a sarcastic, unpleasant manner.

"I have already heard of this paper, for the vice consul has sent word that it was obtained by fraud, wherefore I am ordered to confiscate it."

"By fraud!" I exclaimed. "It was had in the usual way——"

"A paper secured by falsehood is void, and my advice is that you make no talk about it. Of course, I shall retain it."

He turned toward the door, but I called after him imperatively.

"No matter what the passport is, 'tis my property. Give it back!" and I hurried after him with extended hand.

Armijo recoiled, plainly frightened by my impetuosity, but Howard laid a restraining hold upon my arm and, thus checked, I was obliged to see the governor and my pasport disappear together.

"Young man," was his final word, "check yourself, or harm will come to you!"

"The scoundrel!" I cried, and my voice was pitched none too low.

"Calm yourself," Van Ness urged, "or you will go to the bullet!"

"The fellow lied. He has had no word from the vice consul."

"Flicker me life!" Shea exclaimed, "it's dull ye be if you don't see it all. Whin did this matter come up? Why, just after Mister Shanton wint forth to join his own."

"The wretch has sold us out!" I added hotly.

There was no dissenting voice, and when we had talked longer it was agreed that the lawyer had allowed cowardice to master him and had gone over fully to the enemy, and that, further, he had told Armijo of the passport. A base traitor was added to the list of our enemies.

I now reach a point where I had rather be silent, but what I have to tell did so much to turn the course of our own future actions that it must be set down. That afternoon we saw two men taken to the plaza by soldiers and shot in the back. They were Howland and Baker, our comrades who were among the earliest to be taken prisoners. Their only crime was attempted escape from unjust imprisonment.

This tragedy showed us exactly where we stood, for we knew, now, just how high our captors ranked human life, and just how much of humanity and justice we could expect. From that time our standing, our dangers and our mental activity took on new color. We agreed that what had happened to the others might happen to us at any moment.

We were still talking when our forebodings seemed destined to bear immediate fruit. Soldiers appeared, marched us out and across the plaza to where Armijo stood at a window. After being halted a few yards away we were then conducted past, one by one, while he looked at us in utter silence. When the last of us had gone slowly by, the soldiers again formed and we were taken back to our quarters, unharmed, but so mystified that we stared at each other blankly.

"What in thunder does that mean?" Howard asked.

"Perhaps Armijo wanted a good look at us," Fitzgerald suggested.

"But he has already seen us twice, right here," Van Vess reminded.

"So he has. That leaves the mystery too deep for me."

"Our pedigrees have been taken," Shea declared.

"But how? Nobody spoke."

"Shea has hit it!" I cried. "Oh! don't you see the cloven hoof? Somebody stood back of Armijo, out of our sight, but with his eyes on us, and as each man was marched past he told all about us. There is only one man could do that, and he is Isaiah Shanton!"

No voice was raised in opposition to the theory, and we then and there permanently dropped Shanton down into the niche in infamy where he belonged.

We were still talking when the plaza suddenly took on activity. Soldiers became more numerous, and they moved about with much bustle. Growing curious, I questioned the guard at the door. In a way discipline had been lax from the start, and, recently, we had been allowed to talk with guards and citizens. Now, the soldier replied without hesitation:

"We march against the Texans."

"What Texans?" I asked.

"Caramba!—some of your party who are at Anton Chico. There are full two thousand of them, but our heroes laugh at numbers. We march tonight, get near, and then attack in early morning, ere they are fully awake."

"What is the name of the leader?"

"The names escape me. Wait, senor, for I have them. Cooke and Sutton—yes! We shall capture them, dead or alive!"

"Would you attack peaceable men?"

"They are invaders, come to burn, destroy and kill our innocent people."

"Soldier, that is a mistake. They want only to trade——"

"Tell that to the Governor."

"But to attack sleeping men——"

"Perhaps we can persuade them!"

Tapping his rifle significantly and leering wisely, the guard turned away and we asked no more questions. We had been enlightened. Of course, the detachment at Anton Chico were the men we had parted with such a short time before. The names told that, and the exaggeration of numbers mattered nothing, tho we knew they were fewer than one hundred, all told.

The bustle went on outside. Soldiers and weapons were everywhere, and the single cannon was reinforced by two others. To those oxen had been hitched, and we counted as well as we could and estimated that a full thousand Mexicans were to go against our handful of comrades.

We had been like men stunned by the impending calamity, but when we saw Shanton in the plaza, a perfectly free man and in easy and equal association with Armijo, our blood took on a new leap and ideas were quickened. My friends talked volubly, but I finally broke a long silence with words that fell sharply.

"Gentlemen, I am going to Anton Chico to warn Cooke and Sutton."

"Empty words!" grumbled one of my comrades.

"No, for I go as I said. Mark me well, Shanton is to be taken along to cajole and betray our fellows. No doubt the plan is to trick them into giving up their weapons as you did, but it shall not be. I will be there first and let Cooke know what has happened to us."

"How will you go?"

"It has formerly been said by us that we believed we could drop from a window of this prison unseen and steal away, but we have feared that flight would make our situation worse. The risk must be taken now; for the men at Anton Chico are our comrades. I will go!"

"Do you remember why poor Howland was shot?"

"For attempted escape, just as I shall try to go. I'll risk it."

"How can you find your way?"

"I've been over part of the road, and the rest is plain."

"But soldiers will be on the road, too."

"If so, I will evade them. Say no more, brothers. I admit the danger, but what of Cooke? I'm going to make the attempt!"

CHAPTER V.

A BOLD VENTURE.

MY FRIENDS did not give way readily, for, tho their sympathies were keen for their associates at Anton Chico, they felt deep worry for me, a comrade who was with them then, but their arguments failed to shake my purpose. When they weakened a little I explained my plan.

"I shall drop quietly from the window, creep away, secure a horse and ride to Anton Chico. Having warned Cooke and Sutton, I will return and be back in prison at daybreak, for I do not forget that actual flight on my part would work ill to you and our other friends."

"What if you are seen trying to steal a horse?" Van Ness asked.

"That chance must be taken, but I hope to be unseen. Now, remember what it means if I succeed. Cooke will not give up his weapons when he knows the truth, and with his force reunited with the main body under General McLeod, the party may be able to about face and return to Texas. And if they turn back, we who are in prison should be reasonably safe."

The argument was too strong to be opposed for long, and I finally had the whole party of my way of thinking. When the right hour came I was to go.

The military expedition started late, men and cannons, but, at last, with much of idle display and enthusiasm, they went a thousand strong. With their going San Miguel became quiet, possibly with lost sleep to be made up, few soldiers being visible and citizens wholly lacking in the plaza. In the prison I waited for my chosen time.

Presently the officer of the guard came, as on the night before, to use his light and make sure we were all there. When he was gone I shook hands all around.

"Comrades," I said, "I hope our next meeting will be in this world. That's all!"

Besides the guard who paced in front of the door, there was one at the rear, where the single window pierced the wall. I had watched him as he walked his beat and studied his methods, planning my own movements for the first few moments. The question of whether I could avoid being seen was acute.

At the chosen instant I squirmed thru the opening, dropped to the ground, whisked around the corner to the west end of the building and lay flat.

Turning back when at the end of his beat, the guard passed me so closely that I could have touched his legs, but, not looking down, went on unsuspectingly. I ran for a few rods and dropped again, waiting until his face was turned away from me, and then, at the next chance, getting to the cover of other buildings.

I was free, but where was the horse I wanted? The war party had doubtless levied abundantly on all decent quadrupeds, and, tho I longed to have my good Pluto again, I felt that I would be lucky to get any animal with speed.

Horses! Where were they to be found?

I was moving on with the best judgment I could command when, turning the corner of a building, I came upon a man too suddenly to avoid him. I held a scrap of iron I had found in the earth of the prison, and it was my only weapon. I poised it ready for a blow, but the stranger stood without hostility and spoke in a low, mild voice:

"The hand that was weak reaches out to the hand that was strong!"

I started and my blow did not fall. The words, odd they were, came with thrilling familiarity. I had read them in the letter from Cousin Dolores, and she had bidden me to trust whoever might use them to me. Remembering, I found myself in a whirl of emotions. Had I really met a person worthy of confidence?

"Who are you?" I asked cautiously.

"Senor, I am come from one who is your friend. Do you know?"

"Give me further proof."

"Was a writing thrust into your hand as you walked? Did it bid you trust one who might speak the words I have spoken?"

"Repeat the words slowly."

It was done, and then the man continued:

"The one who wrote would save you. I was near the prison and would have come to the window, but you moved first. I have watched you since. Now, we can go."

"Where?"

"You have friends at Anton Chico. Horses are near, and I will guide you. There is danger here. Come!"

"But the one who sent you——"

"Can risk no more. By her order I have provided means of escape. Can you ask anything further?"

I had been studying my companion, and had found him to my liking as a man. Moreover, he had spoken magic words, and recalled a presence that had grown to carry greater magic with me. No longer doubting, my heart was full of gratitude to the noble girl. She had slipped the note into my hand in the plaza, and now she was making good all she promised.

"Come, young senor, come!"

The voice was still mild, but the speaker was growing impatient. I felt that good faith went with him, and hesitated no longer.

"Lead on!" I directed.

We went, and he took me here, there, I know not where, but finally we were in a small grove of cottonwoods just outside the town. A boy was there, holding three horses.

"Mount!" my guide directed.

We swung to saddle, and the lad did the same. I stared at the latter with curiosity that did not pass unnoticed.

"The little one goes with us, senor," the man said. "The lad is dumb, but nobody knows the hidden ways of the hills better than he, and that makes him a better guide than an old man like me. Senor, here is a pistol. Lose no more time. Come!"

"Do you know where my own horse is?"

"Gone with the soldiers to Anton Chico."

"Humph! Beauty and the beast. Lead on!"

We went, and, when clear of the town, broke into a heartening gallop. A few miles were left behind without fresh incident and with little of talk, but I had been scanning my companions. The man was tall and fairly muscular, tho a long white beard told of advanced years. The boy was humbly clad, but he had an alert air that pleased me. If he was palsied of tongue he surely was not dumb of action, for he rode with skill and ease that I could not equal, yet something else claimed my mental attention.

I had been thrilled by the fact that I was off to warn my comrades under Cooke and Sutton, but I suddenly had a rush of new thoughts. In past years I had seen women come and go without quickening pulse, having no deeper sentiment than one of respect for them, but a wave of different feeling was with me now. Senorita Dolores had sympathized with me, planned to save me and supplied guides, and gratitude swept all other subjects away temporarily. Yet, I did not realize that more than gratitude was there, nor clearly see the

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meaning of my own expressions that followed.

"What," I asked of the old man, "is your name?"

"Guido, senor."

"You are a servant of—of her who sent you?"

"Yes, senor."

"You are a fortunate man, Guido. You are privileged to be near her, to hear the sound of her voice and to look into her eyes. Do you realize how you are favored?"

"Senor, she is the best, the noblest, the sweetest!" Guido exclaimed with fervor.

"You use the words I wanted to find, myself. You have good sense. I have seen her, and I know. Fortunately for me, mercy has its abiding place in her womanly heart, and I am not in San Miguel prison. Lucky Guido, you serve at a rarely noble shrine! What did you say of her?—the best, the noblest, the sweetest. She is all that you claim."

"She is. I who have known her all her life say it."

"Her face, her eyes, her grace, her goodness. They have been revealed to me, and I am glad. Like you I am her servant, and like you I am proud to lay my homage at her feet."

"Yes, senor."

There was a touch of reserve in the response, and I checked myself abruptly. He was a humble man, a peon who was her servant, and I became aware that he was not the person to hear so much of that nature.

"Guido," I added, after a pause, "pray don't think me a mere volcano of words, but I've seen your mistress, and tonight I have tasted of her sympathy for the unfortunate. Like you, I admire and honor her, and if I can ever serve her it shall be done."

Better satisfied with this practical conclusion than with my fervid eulogy just previously, I let the matter rest at that, but I meditated deeply on what I owed to Cousin Dolores.

In serving me she risked much, for her Mexican countrymen would not look forgivingly on her if they knew she had supplied guides and aided the hated Americano "invader." I had cause to be grateful, and my early admiration for her had increased many fold.

Presently I noticed something new.

"We are leaving the main road," I said.

"It is safest so, senor. Soldiers are likely to be along the public way to Anton Chico, so we must make a shorter, safer cut thru the hills."

"Excellent! We can get there none too soon."

I had confidence in my guides, but I soon came to dislike the character of our way. The hills seemed to me more like mountains, tho anxiety may have warped my judgment. Certainly, we rode where rocks, bushes and trees made a snarl, and haste was impossible. Still, I assured myself that we had plenty of time.

Another hour we plodded on, twisting and turning in the uncertain light of night. The tangle grew more pronounced, and both my companions began to look about them in a way I did not like. I had seen men gaze like that in the famine hills, and I remembered why.

Finally Guido reined in his horse and turned his head from side to side in an ominous manner. Next he faced me.

"We shall be all right directly," he said, "but now—now we are lost!"

CHAPTER VI.

MY GUIDES.

I TURNED toward the speaker with more worries than one, but as I did so I saw other human figures. Outlined against the sky, men were passing along the top of a cliff at our right. Never seeming to look, they trod with noiseless steps in single file until all disappeared.

The boy grasped the arm of the aged guide, seemingly in terror.

"I know, I know!" muttered Guido. "Indians!"

"Have you hostile red men here?" I asked.

"They are not hostile to us, but foes of many others. Rumor came to San Miguel that Texans were in the hills, and these Apaches were sent by Governor Armijo. I hope they will not discover us."

"You say they are friendly to you. Take this lad and turn back. You have no right to risk yourselves for me."

Guido stroked his beard and looked gravely at our youthful companion.

"The lad," he responded slowly, "the lad—"

The boy made an imperious gesture.

"Pity he is dumb," said I. "Valor shows in every motion. Yet, Guido, do not heed him now. Turn back! Leave me, and——"

Again an imperious motion from the boy.

"No!" spoke the elder guide, stoutly. "My mistress would not have it so. We will go on—we must."

He started and we picked our way as best we could. I had a new worry, for, if the Apaches fell upon us, others must suffer for me. Surely would I have been left alone in the hills, but it was too late. An aged man and a stripling youth could do but little if hard pressed by the red foe. Better, perhaps, that I should keep them company and, if collision came, fight for them, tho I had only the pistol.

Guido showed plenty of courage, tho plainly much troubled. He glanced at the boy, and once I saw his lips move curiously, almost as if he prayed. Perceiving that he felt more acutely for the lad than for himself, I, too, grieved that the youth was along with us, especially as he did not seem to be making good Guido's boast that he knew the way well. All had practically been left to the elder guide.

"Is there not a ranch, or some other building, where he can be left in safety?" I asked. "Poor lad, I would not have him suffer with us."

Again a sweeping gesture from the boy.

"Fear not for him, Senor," said Guido, hastily. "He is brave and reliable."

"Brave he surely is, but too young to be butchered for the sake of another."

"Senor, if he could speak he would say that he is as devoted to duty and as heroic as ourselves."

"I have already said the same, good sir. But so young! Well, well, let us hope for the best. My lad, if trouble comes keep close to me, for I will do my best for you."

The youth turned his head and nodded, but the dim starlight showed his face only indistinctly. Remembering that, if practiced in wild life, he might be better than some bearded men, I dropped consideration of him and gave myself up to other thoughts.

Guido moved forward, but always with irresolution. He plainly was still lost, merely struggling with the hills and their rocks and ravines. Worry had me fast. My comrades rested at Anton Chico, and the Mexican army was pressing on to surprise them. What if we were entangled in the hills long enough to make that surprise a success?

An hour passed. We were still lost, but Guido expressed hope. Believing that he recognized certain landmarks, he urged our horses on, and my own hopes were quickening when we reached a ravine, one side of which rose steeply, an impassable wall two hundred feet high, the other being lower and less precipitous. We entered this place calmly, having lately seen no Indians, and finding quiet there. Stars now shone freely and the sky was cloudless, so the light was good for that hour.

Presently the course grew so rough that we dismounted and, leading our horses, picked our way on foot. We were plodding thus when there was a stir on the lower wall, and, looking up, I saw half a dozen Indians outlined against the sky. All were gazing our way, and their pose was startling. Before I could make a move an arrow cut thru my clothes, its force half turning me around. Then wild yells came from the assailants.

My blood was fired and I flung up my hand, pistol-equipped, and pulled the trigger quickly. Every Indian disappeared immediately.

"It is only cunning!" I cried. "They'll come again. Run!"

At the first yell our horses had begun to struggle fiercely. Guido was still holding to his animal, but it suddenly freed itself and collided with me. My hold was broken, and in another moment the three mounts were bounding over rocks and in a stampede.

"Let them go!" I cried. "We must look to our lives. See, here is a recess with an overhanging roof. Get to that cover! Come!"

Guido and the boy kept by my side. It surprised me that, from the first, the guide had been silent, but now, as he suddenly stumbled and fell, I saw that two arrows protruded from his side. New fear seized upon me.

"'Tis only a small injury, comrade!" I exclaimed cheeringly. "Let me pull the things away—"

But Guido put my hand aside.

"No," he returned hoarsely. "I've got my last hurt. If the arrows are pulled out I shall have but a few seconds. Leave them! I may then live ten minutes."

He fumbled at his breast, produced a cross and pressed it to his lips. The boy fell on his knees and sobbed.

"Nay, do not grieve," the guide added faintly. "I am an old man, and my day is in the past. To the aged, death is but the peace of a quiet dream. Madre Dios, receive my soul!"

The lad wept, and I bent over the man with keen regret at my heart.

"Friend, good friend," I said, "this cuts me deep! Can I do nothing? Tell me."

"Watch for the foe," was his whispered response. "They will skulk near. Watch and—oh! senor, save this—this boy!"

"I will, I will!"

"I go fast. Life leaves me. The cross, the cross!"

It had fallen on his breast. He fumbled, and then raised his hand. He moved the hand toward his lips—and then stopped short.

"This, this!" he gasped.

Even in the starlight I could see that his eyes had grown wild, and his manner was agitated. He held, not the cross, but my seven-pointed star. The arrow that had struck my coat had so torn the garment that, as I now bent over the dying man, the star had fallen upon his breast. He stared at it with emotion that was mysterious to me.

Suddenly he turned his head and faced me.

"I did not know!" he said feebly. "Brother, I view the Sacred Star! May it give you peace and success. We have this night traveled together, even as it was writ. I did not know that—that you were a brother."

He conveyed the object to his left breast.

"Next to my heart, even as it was ordained in the days of dawn," he added. "So let me go to the valley of the call——"

He paused, gasped, his hand relaxed and the star fell. His eyes became unearthly in their look.

"Oh! Guido, Guido!" moaned the youth, "do not leave me, do not go!"

The dull eyes opened.

"I go," Guido replied in a barely audible whisper, "but, Senorita Dolores, I will ask the Virgin to care for you. Senorita, beloved earthly mistress, thy servant—is gone!"

He fumbled again. His companion lifted the cross, and Guido breathed his last with it pressed to his lips. The younger guide burst into passionate tears.

Had the Indians come then the surprise would have been complete. I was gazing at my surviving comrade with stupefied blankness. I had heard that comrade called "Senorita Dolores" by the dying man. It might have been delirium, but the name, the voice that was now a woman's voice, the bitter weeping that was a woman's weeping, and the transformation of the dumb—I looked, and the truth came to me.

The youthful guide was no boy—I was with Dolores!

My mind worked slowly as I tried to analyze the situation. She was there, but why?—why had she come with me? Selfish reasons she could not have, and there was a delay while I studied further. Then her weeping lessened and, lifting her head, she looked at me.

"He was a very good man," she said pathetically.

"I am sure of it, Senorita Dolores," I answered.

"He served me long and well."

"There is a reward in the other world for such as Guido, senorita."

"I forgot," she said, starting suddenly. "I am speaking, and—and you call me Senorita Dolores."

"So did Guido."

"You know me?"

"I know and bless you, Senorita, your kindness overwhelms me, for your goodness to a poor stranger is great."

"Ah! but you saved my little cousin!"

"I did not risk a hundredth part of what you have risked for me."

I took her hand and pressed it to my lips and she did not demur, but she turned matters into a practical channel with a quick question.

"Where are our enemies?" she asked, looking at the top of the cliff.

I did not know, but we were imperfectly screened, and I wondered that the Indians who had already done such deadly work did not follow up their attack. Failure to do so was unlike them. I could now see nobody on the opposite rocks, but peril was certainly there.

"If we could go on——"

Thus I began, but hesitated, and Dolores finished for me.

"Impossible! They would shoot us as they shot Guido. We must keep in this niche, which is our only protection."

"Then let us draw back. The shadows are darker there, and it will be impossible for them to see us. What weapons have we?"

"Guido had a pistol."

"So have I, but I fired it when we were attacked, and I have nothing to reload it with. Guido's pistol——"

I searched and found it empty, nor could I discover ammunition on his person. We had two useless firearms, and the knife I took from the body was the only thing to rely upon if attack came. As I searched, my hand fell upon the Sacred Star, and I held it up. Remembering where I had found it, I sought for light.

"Senorita, is this yours?" I asked.

"This?" she murmured. "No. I never saw it before, nor anything like it. What is it?"

"A square of copper with a small ring in one corner, for the use of a chain, and the device of the square is a seven-pointed star in low relief on a level plane."

"It is not mine," she returned indifferently, and looked away.

Its origin became a mystery, but I knew it was no frivolity. Seeing it, Guido, a grave, sensible man, had momentarily turned aside from the gates of death to press it to his lips and hail me as a brother. I understood vaguely that there was a brotherhood, an emblem and a purpose, but what it all meant I did not know. Impressed with the belief that the star was a valuable piece of property I again stowed it away in my pocket, and with great care. Once more it awaited the hour when it was to rule the destiny of life.

Huddling in the darkness of the niche, we looked into the starlit ravine and meditated. Great longing for liberty was with us, but we were prisoners without bonds. Hemmed in, we sat helpless while my comrades at Anton Chico remained without the warning I vehemently wished to give them.

This strange story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it. The surest way to get the Ledger is to subscribe for it, and have it come to your home regularly. Today is a good time to attend to this.

KIND WISHES.

"I'm so glad to see you!" cried the girl with the new spring hat that looked like a section of stove pipe with a feather duster stuck on it. "I've been just dying to talk to you ever since your engagement was announced! I was so surprised!"

"Were you?" inquired the girl who was buying lace. "I thought everybody expected it."

"Goodness, no!" cried the girl with the remarkable hat. "Now, some people you always expect are going to get married or elope or something—but I never dreamed that you'd do it! You've always been so interested in things like social settlements and women's progress and all that, and that's enough to scare away any man! Men usually run from a girl who isn't attractive in a feminine way, don't you think? They hate to have them smarter than themselves—and you have got brains, dear! Fancy your taking time to fall in love! It is positively funny!"

"I don't see why!" objected the bride-elect.

"Oh, it is!" insisted the girl with the hat. "It just shows that you never can tell. About men, that is.

"To think," went on the girl with the hat, "of Dick Adams picking you out! You aren't a bit the kind of girl he has always been crazy over! Not, of course, that he ever really cared for any one before he met you, but I mean the ones he called on five evenings in a week and took to all the theaters and parties and that every one thought he was going to marry. It doesn't stand to reason that he could do that and then drop them all himself. Don't you see that they must have thrown him over?

"We were talking about him at the card club the other day, and the girls said they believed he held the record on refusals to marry him. It must have been a pleasant surprise for him when you said yes. I suppose the poor fellow had really got to the point of desperation. It was lovely of you to make it all up to him that way, dear. I feel sorry for a man who isn't popular. I suppose you are terribly happy—now that you feel you are settled at last. It must be such a relief to find that one hasn't got to stick in the background after all! When is the wedding to be? Don't you give him time to change his mind, my dear!"

"I'm not worried about that," said the girl who was buying lace. "A man who won't stick of his own accord isn't worth having. But thank you for your interest in us, it is remarkable in its way."

"Not at all!" insisted the girl with the hat. "Why shouldn't I be interested when I'm such an old friend of both of you? This is the time when friends count. I'd have written you a note only it's so hard to say on paper all you want to say. That is why I am so delighted to have run across you today. Dick is a dear boy; I don't care what any one says! I don't think it is at all necessary for a man to set the world on fire in order to be acceptable. I'd rather have him just nice and retiring and meek like Dick.

"The men who make successes in business are aggressive and different—stronger in every way—but I'm glad you don't mind that and can appreciate Dick for what he is. I don't suppose you'll mind at all being poor and not being able to have and do things like the other girls. I think it is quite noble of you.

"And then, of course, somebody may die and leave Dick some money. And you're in luck not to have a handsome husband—the women always flirt with them so. You'll find Dick is a great comfort to know nobody will bother Dick.

"Did you have a terrible time with his family when he broke the news? His mother and sister have always been so ambitious for him. They seemed to have the idea that he should marry a raving beauty with millions, and I suppose they took it hard. I would give them as good as they send—just bluff it out, my dear. A man's mother and sisters always are so foolish about him and they overrate him so!

"I think you and Dick are perfectly suited to each other! It was silly of them to fancy a girl would marry him if she had other chances, but that's the way with so many mothers! Don't you let them be disagreeable to you."

"Why, they have been perfectly beautiful to me!" cried the bride-elect with fury in her voice. "I don't see why they shouldn't——"

"That's just what I say!" broke in her friend. "They ought to appreciate the fact that Dick has got a girl at last! Are you going to have a big wedding? That'll be too bad if you do, because white is so unbecoming to you, and if it were a small affair you could wear your tailor suit. White is kind of silly when one is your age, anyhow, don't you think? Still, nobody would dream that Dick is younger than you to look at you quickly——"

"He isn't!" exclaimed the bride-elect. "The idea! You'll have to excuse me, for I'm very busy!"

"I'm so glad I met you," repeated the girl with the hat. "I did so want to congratulate you in person!"

The Sure Way.

Mrs. Flatbush—"I think it too bad you're always 'knocking' my biscuits."

Mr. Flatbush—"Well, I've got to break 'em some way, haven't I?"

Opposing Cause and Effect.

"I have just got down to my bottom dollar."

"How so?"

"In buying a top coat."

THROWN OFF THE SCENT

Natural Result.

"I understand Blank doesn't stammer so much since he got married."

"Of course not; he gets fewer chances to talk than he used to."

Client Is Aroused.

Overbearing Lawyer—"Ignorance of the law excuses no one."

Meek Client—"I'll be sorry for you, then, if you ever get in trouble."

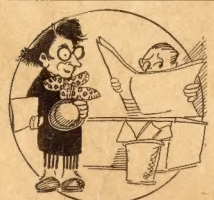
Rastus (escaping from the penitentiary)—"Lawsy! Ah's plumb tuckered out, an' dem guards gittin' closer every minute!

"Ha! A fresh painted seat and a stovepipe hat some guy lost trail.

"That jist gives me a good hunch to throw the hounds off mah

"Dese big checks may not be berry good taste, but——

"Dey is bound to be safer."



Poet—"If I could but write an immortal ode I would be willing to die!"

Editor—"If you ever do, bring it to me and you will never need a sort of stuff makes me peevish!"

Afraid.

"Indeed," the speaker went on, "I believe that nine women out of ten propose. As a test I would ask all married men in the audience whose wives virtually popped the question to stand up."

There was a subdued rustle in the auditorium, and in the dense silence that followed could be heard sibilant feminine whispers in concert: "Just you dare stand up!"

Patrick Henry's Biography.

An instructor at the Hampton Institute in Virginia tells of a composition on Patrick Henry written by an Indian lad there:

"Patrick Henry was not a bright boy. He had blue eyes and light hair. He got married and then said, 'Give me liberty or give me death!'"

First Glance Was Hurried.

A mistress who had been thoroly annoyed by the company her cook entertained in the kitchen remonstrated with the girl and ordered her to see her friends in her own quarters after working hours.

One evening a little later the mistress left the girl in the dining-room and went to the kitchen for something. A big colored man was occupying a rocking chair there. Indignant, she hurried back to the dining-room.

"Cindy," she remarked, "I told you not to have your beaus in the kitchen."

"Lawa, miss, he ain't no beau. He's my brudder."

Mollified, the mistress went again to the kitchen. "So you are Cindy's brother?" she said kindly.

"No, miss," he answered, "I ain't no relation to her. I'm just keepin' comp'ny with her."

The mistress, now thoroly angered, sought out Cindy.

"Cindy," she said sternly, "why did you tell me that man was your brother? He says he is no relation to you."

Cindy was aghast. "Fo' de Lawd's sake, miss, did he say dat? Jes' yo stay here an' let me go look ag'in."

His Story.

"Were you lonesome while I was away, Bertram, dear?" asked his wife when she returned from her trip to the seashore.

"Yes, love; I was dreadfully lonesome," replied Bertram dutifully.

"But why didn't you write to me oftener? I had only two letters from you the whole time I was away."

"Well, you see, my dear, I tried to write you, but I couldn't make the letters sound cheerful, and I was afraid you'd discover how lonesome I was and come right home. I wouldn't have spoiled your vacation for the world, love."

And he really thought she believed him.

FELICITATIONS.

The price of leather's higher now,
And woolens are no longer cheap;
I'm glad that I am not a cow,
Nor pig nor sheep.
I'm glad that I am not a hen,
Nor turkey—anything of worth—
But only one of common men,
The cheapest things on earth!

There's safety in this common lot.
To us savants pay little heed,
Reduce our numbers they do not
In trying to improve the breed.
So far, we're free from trust control,
Cold storage, livestock shows and such;
Nobody cares, upon the whole—
We do not matter very much!

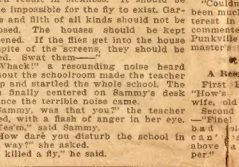
Job for Some Women.

Smith—"Do you think that working at high explosives is a fit occupation for women?"

Brown—"Certainly I do."

Smith—"Well, would you let your wife undertake it?"

Brown—"No, but I'd encourage her mother to go into it!"



Mendicant—"Kind lady, could you help a poor fellow whose wife is starving because he is six months in arrears on his alimony?"

A Change of Air.

Flanagan sat on his front doorstep enjoying the balmy freshness of the spring evening.

Presently his neighbor Murphy passed by the fence for a chat.

"A foine av'nin'," said he, pleasantly. "But why isn't Mrs. Flanagan wid ye enj'yin' the air?"

"Sure, Mike," replied Flanagan, "the missus has gone for a change av air!"

"Has she, now?" replied Murphy, interested. "And it's hope the change will do her good. And where was she after goin'? Brooklyn, Oi suppose?"

"Then ye suppose wrong," Flanagan informed him. "Shure, an' isn't she seated at this moment on the back door-step?"

Practical Superstition.

"James says he believes in signs for everything."

"Is he that superstitious?"

"It isn't superstition; it's business. He paints 'em."

He "Saw" Papa.

"I love you."

"Have you seen papa?"

"Yes, I saw him last night at the poker party. That's how I got enough money to propose on."

Swatting the Fly.

"The fly is the most dangerous insect known except the mosquito," said the teacher. "The fly walks in filth and then comes into the home, scattering germs which result in sickness. It should be made impossible for the fly to exist. Garbage and filth of all kinds should not be exposed. The houses should be kept screened. If the flies get into the house in spite of the screens, they should be killed. Swat them—"

"Whack!" a resounding noise heard thruout the schoolroom made the teacher jump and startled the whole school. The eyes finally centered on Sammy's desk whence the terrible noise came.

"Sammy, was that you?" the teacher asked, with a flash of anger in her eye.

"Yes'm," said Sammy.

"How dare you disturb the school in this way?" she asked.

"I killed a fly," he said.

Her Idea.

"At a recent test a postal clerk read 3,000 postal cards in an hour."

"Couldn't have been much of interest in them," commented the slipping Punkville postmaster's wife.

A Reprisite.

First Brute—"How's your wife, old man?"

Second Brute—"Fine! Got a head, she can't speak above a whisper!"

His Excuse.

When the present war was in its infancy "hangers back" found themselves continually taken to task.

A grocer's traveler, calling for the usual order, was scornfully asked why he was not answering his country's call. Thinking he could see a good customer slipping away, an excuse was desperately urgent.

Fortunately an incoming customer relieved the position and a happy idea came his way.

"Madam," he continued, "perhaps if I told you I've not all my toes on one foot you would scarcely believe it."

This aroused the sympathy of the shopkeeper, whereupon he got an increased order. When she told her husband of the young man's misfortune he coolly replied: "Well, have you?"

The feelings of the good lady can be better imagined than described.

COUNTEREFFICIENCY.

We know the German legions
Are well trained and supplied,
As any in their regions,
But consider our side!
We'll get their caprine muttons;
They've not a single chance;
They have two sets of buttons,
But we've two pairs of pants!

Bound to Succeed.

Pat's one trouble was that he could not wake up in the morning. His landlady had tried every device she could think of, but even the most determined of alarm clocks had no effect on Pat's slumbers.

One day he returned from his work with a large paper parcel.

"There, now, Mrs. Jones," said he, triumphantly, as he unwrapped a huge bell, "and what d'ye think o' that now?"

"Goodness, man!" exclaimed the surprised landlady. "Whatever are you wanting with that great thing?"

As he tucked the bell under his arm and prepared to go upstairs, Pat replied, with a knowing grin:

"Sure, and I'm going to ring it at six o'clock iviry morning and wake mesilf up!"

Miss Pansy—"No, I can never marry you. All our family is opposed to you."

Suitor—"But if you are not——?"

Miss Pansy—"I said all our family."

The Absent-minded Professor.

Professor Gigiamor dropped in at his friend the doctor's the other night.

He was breathing heavily, and seemed to be in a great hurry.

"Ah, professor!" said the doctor. "Come in! Let me take your coat and hat. Been taking a sharp walk, I suppose, after the day's work? How's the great book getting on—the monograph on 'Biological Researches Among the Neolithic Tribes of Northern Nigeria'?"

Once started on the topic nearest his heart, the professor dropped into an easy chair and talked for hours. A bottle of whisky was produced, and it was about midnight before the guest rose to leave.

"Well, good night, professor," said the doctor. "Give my regards to all at home. They're all well, I suppose?"

"My goodness!" cried the professor, clapping his hand to his brow. "That reminds me! I knew I came to see you about something. My wife's nearly dying of ptomaine poisoning!"

Couldn't Shave Well.

The philosophical professor met several of his colleagues and said: "It is a strange thing, but I was shaved this morning by a man who really is, I suppose, a little above being a barber. I know of my own knowledge that he is an alumnus of one of the leading American colleges; that he studied in Heidelberg afterward, and spent several years in other foreign educational centers. I know also of my own knowledge, that he has contributed scientific articles to our best magazines, and has numbered among his intimate friends men of the highest social and scientific standing in Europe and America. And yet," soliloquized the professor, "he can't shave a man decently."

"By jove!" exclaimed one of the party in astonishment. "What is he a barber for, with all those accomplishments?"

"Oh, he isn't a barber," said the professor, yawning. "You see, I shaved myself this morning."

The Highest Form.

A teacher in the primary department had been holding forth on the three great divisions of Nature—the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral. When she had finished she put this question:

"Who can tell me what is the highest form of animal life?"

A little girl bounced from her seat and with the certainty of being right, exclaimed:

"The giraffe, mum."

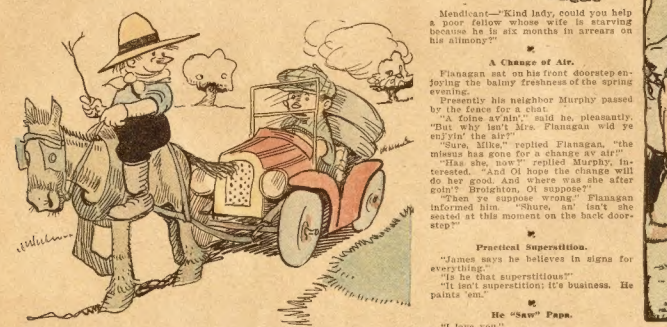
Loaded to Capacity.

"Bobby, did you have a good time at the party?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Why didn't you stay until it was over?"

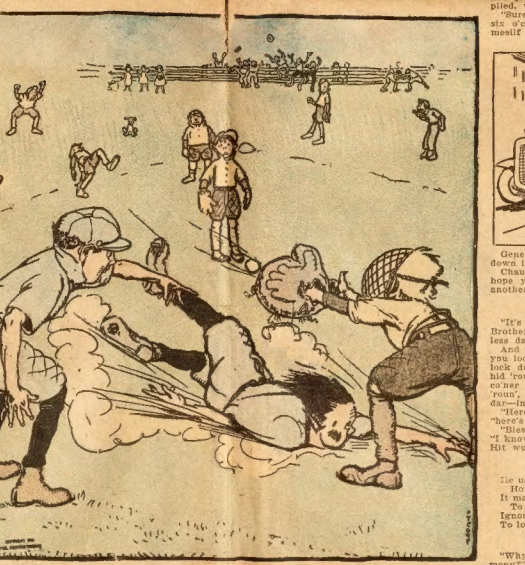
"What was the use? I couldn't eat any more."



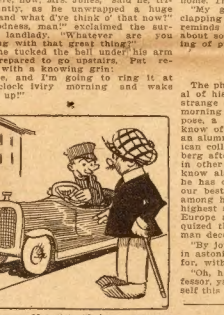
Motorist (who has hired a hitch for his stalled car)—"Can't you go a bit faster?"

Farmer—"Faster! Say, if you want ter git arrested fer speeding, I don't! Now, you hear me!"

"BEN BOLT"—The Kid That You Were Yourself.



Don't you remember that "homer," Ben Bolt;
That "homer" we needed to win?
'Twas a ninth inning tie, and excitement ran high,
While you slid for the plate on your chin.



Generous Motorist—"I have put you down in my will for my car, James!"

Chauffeur—"Thank you, sir! But I hope you will live to trade it in for another!"

In His Pocket.

"It's a dark day," some one said to Brother Williams, "a very dark, hopeless day."

And then the old negro said: "Hit's ez you look at it. But why don't you unlock de sunshine? Ain't you got some hid 'round de house some'rs—in some o' co'ner what you clean forgot? Look 'roun', an' tu'n de sunshine loose. It's dar—in yo' house and heart."

"There," the dark day mourner said, "here's a dollar for you, old man."

"Bless God!" Brother Williams said. "I knowed you'd turn loose de sunshine. Hit wus in yo' pocket all de time!"

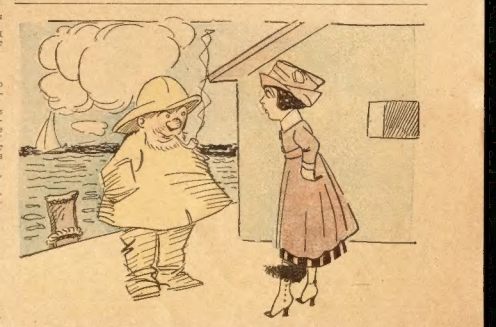
AFTER MARRIAGE.

He used to look into her eyes
Hours at a stretch—
It makes her peevish, you surmise,
To find the wretch
Ignoring all her pretty capers
To look into the daily papers.

Bungling Partners.

"Why are you so unfavorable to matrimony?"

"Every time I play bridge with a man," replied Miss Cayenne, "I shudder at the idea of having him as a partner for life."



The Native—"Yes'm. I'm a deep sea fisherman. Been such for forty years."

The Fair Visitor—"A deep sea fisherman! How nice! Then tell me, do you believe in a personal devilfish?"

To Shoot on Sight

By Edgar White

CRACK! Crack! . . . Crack! Crack! Crack!

As the five shots rang out on the greensward surrounding the new courthouse at Hawthorne, the whole town was thrown into a whirlwind of confusion. Some six-foot citizens and lesser ones sought the shelter of trees, others ran to the two men who had done the shooting. Among these were some deputies with stars on their breasts. Two or three excited individuals jerked out revolvers and looked wildly around, as if seeking somebody to use for a target.

Meanwhile the duelists, two men with whitening hair and mustaches, were receiving attentions from their friends. Two middle-aged women ran out of the hotels on the square and hurried to the lawn. Both were thin, careworn and extremely agitated. Presently two little groups separated out of the now dense crowd, and made their way toward two of the hotels. In each group was a wounded man.

The fighters were Colonel William Fiske and Major Tobias Jarrett. They were the litigants in a lawsuit, which had resulted in a hung jury. Meeting outside of the courthouse unexpectedly, a harsh word was spoken, a hot reply came, and in a flash both drew their weapons and began shooting. Major Jarrett received a ball in the right hip, and Colonel Fiske was wounded in the left shoulder. As the men were led away by their friends, each vowed he would shoot straighter next time. The two thin-faced women who had hurried to the scene were the wives of the principals in the vendetta.

Neither man was seriously injured, and next day friends went to them and tried to patch up the trouble.

Tell Colonel Fiske when he sends me a written apology," said Major Jarrett, "that I will consider it."

"Apology!" snorted Colonel Fiske, when the peacemaker had put the matter up to him; "you will please inform Major Jarrett I'll present my apology on the point of the sword, sir!"

The belligerents had been in the army service during the war between the States, Major Jarrett as a gallant officer with the national forces; and Colonel Fiske following the banner of Dixie. They owned neighboring plantations near Hawthorne, and had been bitter enemies from the time the gathering war clouds had caused them to view things from opposite angles. Returning home, one a victor and the other vanquished, the embers of the old antagonism smoldered until a difference broke out concerning their property lines thru cottonwood bottoms. The matter had been shuttled from District to Appellate Court and back—there had been changes of venues, stays and continuances, piling up a ghastly mountain of costs at every turn of the wheel, and now, after a week's weary battle, the jury had hung up! Their nerves on edge, it was but natural when the two parties at interest met outside the courthouse that something would happen.

Before he was out of the physician's care, Major Jarrett sent a challenge to Colonel Fiske, who promptly accepted it, and named cavalry revolvers as the weapons, twenty paces as the distance, the parties to fire on signal and advance toward each other, firing as they moved; the time as soon as Major Jarrett had sufficiently recovered the use of his limb.

The district judge, the Hon. Samuel Poline, heard of the challenge and its acceptance and had the two warriors haled before him. Major Jarrett came, using a cane and limping slightly. Colonel Fiske's right arm was in a sling. The court put them each under a bond of one thousand dollars to keep the peace, and endeavored to exact from them a promise to call the duel off. Finally Major Jarrett, the challenger, said:

"I'll let him keep on his side of the road and I'll keep on mine!"

"I've no wish to pass anywheres near you, sir!" Colonel Fiske flared back.

Judge Bodine pounded with his gavel. "You two men, with fine military records, the heads of good families, ought to be ashamed of yourselves for keeping up this foolish quarrel," the Judge sternly observed. "Now, go back home and try to overcome this feeling. Both of you, in every other respect, are good citizens, and it is your duty as good citizens to keep the law."

Within a month Colonel Fiske was before the Judge with a bitter complaint.

"Judge Bodine," he said hotly, "every time I come to this town I'm insulted by the officers of the law!"

"Insulted, Colonel? How?" mildly inquired the Judge.

"Why, they search me—take my arms from me, sir! Three times they've done it!"

"Well, they've done the same thing to Major Jarrett four times," remarked Judge Bodine.

"Judge," said Colonel Fiske, almost plaintively, "you've been a soldier, and a good one, altho you were with the Yanks. You can feel what it is to be a soldier to have one of these big-starred deputy sheriffs who never smelled hostile gunpowder reach into a gentleman's pockets same as if he were a thief." The Colonel suddenly blazed up: "By gad, sir! I'm afraid that some time I can't stand it! It's all I can do to hold in!"

The Judge understood how the old soldier felt about the thing, and after studying the matter a while he gave orders to the sheriff to instruct his men to quit searching the feudists.

"But keep an eye on them when they come to town," he advised the officer; "they're liable to meet and it will be like touching a lighted match to gunpowder. To tell the truth I'm uncertain as to what's best to do with them; they've given me more concern than anything else that has developed in the district since I've been on the bench."

Those patriotic souls that believed in binding up a nation's wounds had scarce put the "bloody shirt" to its last long sleep when a new cry resounded thruout the nation: "Remember the Maine!" As in the tragic dawn of the sixties, there was a rush from everywhere to the standard, only this time it was all to the same standard—the Stars and Stripes.

The Hawthorne guard, a company of youths well drilled before the war with Spain was thought of, was the first to answer ready for entraining to Cuba. Robert E., youngest son of Colonel William Fiske, was its captain, and little Phil Jarrett, the pride of Major Jarrett's declining years, was first lieutenant. Beardless boys they were, the captain being but 22, and his first lieutenant 20.

Hawthorne gave its young soldiers a rousing send-off. The village band led the parade to the depot, and pretty girls strewed flowers along the way. All the stores were decked with flags and festoons of red, white and blue. It was a fine sight—this going off to war! The cheering crowd did not think of the formidable defenses with which Blanco had girdled Havana, nor of the swamps and malaria district about tropical Santiago; neither did it see the Mauser-swept hills of El Caney and San Juan. But there were two men with shaggy gray mustaches and hollowed cheeks who thought of Lookout Mountain, and Chickamauga, and Franklin, and the khaki uniforms, the business like Krag-Jorgensens and the martial music brought no glad light to their eyes.

The long train rolled in, and the big crowd roared with enthusiasm as it saw the car windows filled with other bright-eyed lads in buff going down the line. There were hurried good-bys, eager kisses to the girl left behind and the waving of many handkerchiefs.

Captain Robert E. Fiske saw his men safely quartered in the two cars reserved for them, and then he came springing down the steps, grasping the arm of Lieutenant Phil Jarrett, and approached Colonel Fiske. As the two stood before the old man, Captain Bob laid his arm on his lieutenant's shoulder.

"Father," he said earnestly, "Phil and I are going off to the Army to see this thing thru. I'll sleep better of nights if you would—if you would——"

The young officer hesitated and flushed at the presumption of the request he had in mind.

Suddenly Colonel Fiske's right arm shot out toward little Lieutenant Phil, and, as the two clasped hands he said huskily:

"God bless you, boys, and may He bring you back to us safe and sound!" Then he looked at the banner the Hawthorne company's standard bearer was holding up between two cars and there was a flash in his deep-set eyes.

"Zounds!" he cried, taking off his broad-brimmed hat; "it's our flag, boys! It cost an ocean of tears and a world of heartaches, but it is worth it all! Stand by and defend it as you would your mother's honor!" and in his excitement he alternately threw his arms around the two young men and strained them to his breast.

The long train moved out as the band played "Dixie," and the crowd waved hats and handkerchiefs and yelled itself hoarse. Then the people moved slowly up town, talking animatedly over the biggest occasion, possibly, that had come into the lives of most of them—all but two. Colonel Fiske stood near a corner of the depot and glanced furtively thru the operator's bay window at an old-like gentleman, with a cane, who stood at the other corner, and was looking in the direction the train had gone. Only these two remained at the depot, and when the young operator looked thru his bay window and saw them, he whistled in his excitement. Then he seized the telephone, called up the sheriff's office and made known the dangerous situation. The sheriff was not in the office, but a big deputy was, and he hastened to the depot to interpose the strong arm of the law between the feudists. The deputy stepped on the platform where Major Jarrett was thoughtfully regarding the smoke from the train which had taken his boy to war.

"Hands up, Major!"

Suddenly confronted by a pistol in the hands of a man whom until that moment he had not noticed, Major Jarrett turned livid with rage at the intrusion and the insolent manner of the officer.

"What do you mean, sir!" he demanded. "What right have you to address me that way?" and he clutched his cane, his hand twitching with the temptation to use it.

"You lift that cane on me and I'll shoot, Major," said the excited deputy. "I'll have to search you for weapons."

"Search me?" cried Major Jarrett. "Would you dare——"

The deputy thrust his revolver closer and reached out his left hand towards the hip pocket of the suspected offender, when something like a thunderbolt struck him, and he fell to the ground, his pistol dropping from his hand.

"You infernal rascal!" cried Colonel Fiske, who, with a wagon-stake in his hand, stood over the wrecked majesty of the law; "don't you know any better how to treat a gentleman?"

The deputy slowly arose and started to pick up his pistol, but Colonel Fiske seized it first, and leveling it at the deputy's head, gave the order:

"March! Or as sure as the sun is this moment setting, I'll blow your head off!"

The deputy looked at the wrathful man in bewilderment.

"I thought——" he began.

"March!"

The pistol was held on a line with his head, and the deputy saw that the hand that held it did not quiver. So he "marched."

"Colonel Fiske," said Major Jarrett, "I want to thank you for relieving me from a most distressing predicament. That man wanted to search me! If he had come to me like a gentleman and asked if I had a revolver, I would have told him that I had not carried one for ten years."

"Neither have I, Major," remarked Colonel Fiske. The two men stood silent a moment or two, and then Colonel Fiske, with his eyes batting, turned to his old enemy:

"Major Jarrett," he said, holding out his hand. "I've just shaken hands with your brave boy and wished him well. Won't—won't you——"

Neither Mrs. Jarrett nor Mrs. Fiske had gone to the train with their boys because, being mothers, they reasoned that they would break down at the parting, and they did not wish to unnerve their sons amid the big crowd. So the bitter farewells occurred in the sanctity of the old homestead. There, as the shadows fell, they awaited their husbands to bring them the tidings of the departure. They lived too far from town to hear the cheering, but soon after the train had pulled out some one in town learned of the operator's frantic call at the sheriff's office and this person, a well-intentioned blunderer, called up the two women and told them their husbands had met at the depot.

To the distraught women who had grown old under the shadow of the feud, the news meant that the end had come. Too agitated to call and ask what had happened, and dreading to hear, Mrs. Fiske stood on the front porch, looking down toward the road. As darkness fell, she lit a lantern and walked out to the front gate, placing the light on one of the posts. She had done this several times when her husband had been over in town after dark, because she wanted him to know that she was waiting and expecting him. It was her signal that all was well.

"Mary."

A woman had stepped up out of the darkness. She had an old shawl over her shoulders. The thin left hand held it at her throat. It was Mrs. Jarrett.

"That you, Sarah?"

FREE ASTHMA REMEDY

D. J. Lane, a chemist at 115 Lane Bldg., St. Marys, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for asthma, in which he has such confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by mail to anyone who will write him for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures, and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge. * * *

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Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years, and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

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No need now to waste time soaking your feet so often. Nor run the risk of paring.

BLUE-JAY plasters have ended millions of corns. This very night thousands of people will say goodbye to pain—I corns forever. Touchy corns are needless, even foolish

Blue-jay brings instant relief. And in 48 hours the average corn is gone. Only a few stubborn ones require a second or third treatment.

A Blue-jay plaster, with its healing wax, is applied in a jiffy. No soreness, no inconvenience. The pain is not temporarily eased, as with parers. There is no danger, as with harsh liquids. Decide to join the happy crowd tonight which has won freedom the Blue-jay way.

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Blue-jay

Stops Pain—Ends Corns
Sold by all Druggists
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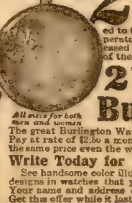

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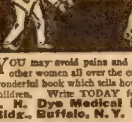
Do You Love Children?



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Cameos are set in fine gold filled ring. Guaranteed for three years. To introduce new Ring Bargains, will send post paid, your size, upon receipt of 15c to pay advertising.

The Auction Co., Dept.169 Attleboro, Mass.

"Yes, Mary. You heard the news?" Mary nodded.

"They met on the depot, but I was afraid to ask——"

"So was I."

The old women stood in anxious silence peering down the road. There was a new moon, and they could faintly distinguish the outlines of the highway leading from town. Suddenly Mary Fiske exclaimed:

"There's somebody coming up the lane!"

She took the lantern from the post and swung it across the road.

"There are two men and one of them is helping the other along—he's wounded," cried Sarah. "Oh, God!"

Mary threw her arm around her companion's neck. Slowly the two women sank to their knees in the dusty road, their arms entwined. The lantern rested on the earth in front of them. The figures in the roadway seemed moving with difficulty. Briefly they were swallowed up in the shadow of some tall trees by the roadside.

"Jesus, Savior! Have mercy upon us!" murmured Sarah, and Mary whispered. Amen!"

There they knelt, their old hearts quivering as they held tightly to each other and waited with the beacon light in front of them. Their heads were bent in silent prayer, as the new moon cast a halo over their silvery heads.

It seemed an eternity, but at last the slowly moving figures came out of the shadows of the tall trees and into the softened light of the moon. Mary looked up, and uttered a glad shout. Seizing Sarah's hand she jumped up, leading Sarah with her.

"It's our men, Sarah!" she cried. "They're walking arm-in-arm! Let's run and meet them!"

⁂

Chance to Help.

"Well, how do you like my garden?" said the gardening girl to the young man next door, who persisted in hanging over the fence to watch the gardening process.

"I like it immensely," responded the young man. "I was going to say that if you wanted any spading or digging done I would be glad to do it for you."

"Well, I don't need any right now. You see, my brother digs it up for me every Sunday morning."

"He's a nice, accommodating relative."

"He is nice," responded the girl, leaning gracefully upon her hoe. "But he's not so very accommodating.

"I have to get my garden spaded up by strategy. Bob is very fond of fishing and he has to have worms. So I show him where the worms are thickest, which is always where I want digging done. Do you ever go fishing?"

"No," answered the young man, "but I am in favor of it. I'll bet a fellow who is digging for fishing worms spades a lot deeper and faster than a fellow who is only digging worms for the birds to eat—that is, of course, if he has no taste for digging. But I have. I love to dig and any time you want any done——"

"Why, a lady across the street wants to get her back yard dug up——"

"Why, she can get her garden dug by the fishing worm method!" suggested the young man, brightly. "She can put an ad in the paper: 'Free fishing worms! and get her entire lot dug thoroly.

"Some way or other I don't take much interest in gardening clear over across the street. I'm interested in this garden only, and if I can't dig in this one I won't dig in any. But I would do any kind of work here. Now there's that big bunch of weeds! I would enjoy pulling them all out by the roots if you'd only let me, and I'd do a good job, too. All I ask is a chance, and if I don't give satisfaction you can discharge me——"

"Let me see," said the gardening girl, thoughtfully. "It would take you about an hour to weed this row of beans."

"Maybe I can do it in less time than that!" and the young fence hanger sprang lightly over the fence.

"All right," agreed the girl, "you may pull those weeds while I am running off a note to a gentleman friend, and by the time you get the weeding done I'll have my letter written, then I'll come out to see how you're getting along."

"An hour—gentleman friend!" said the hanger. But he bent to his task.

"Well," said the gardening girl, "on second thought, I can postpone writing the letter. I'll watch you work!"

⁂

Got Even.

Angus MacBroth, the village innocent, stood outside the farmyard rubbing himself, while on the other side of the gate an infuriated bull pawed the ground savagely.

"Did the black bull get ye?" asked the farmer anxiously, as he came running up.

"Did he?" snorted Angus. "D'ye no see I'm rubbin' masel'? But Ah'll get even wi' him, the brute!"

Ten minutes later he returned to the farmhouse, his face spread in a smile.

"A've dune it," he told the farmer. "A've got even wi' that black heart ower yonder."

"Whit wey?" asked the bull's owner.

"Weel, I jist went tae the wee broon calf and fetched him a whack—sick a bonnie yin, tae, o'er the lug—an' says I tae him: 'Noo, gang an' tell yer feyther about that.'"

At First Glance.

Visitor—"What is a man like that doing here in jail?"

Warden—"Time, mum."

Progressive Motion.

"The world moves in cycles."

"Yes, and it is fast getting to move on motorcycles."

Powerful Mind.

"So Stubkins has a mind of his own?"

"I should say he has. And you ought to see her use it."

Physicians Explain Why They Prescribe Nuxated Iron So Widely

For Creating Red Blood, Building Up the Nerves, Strengthening the Muscles and Correcting Digestive Disorders—Often Increases the Strength of Delicate, Nervous, Run-down Folks 100 Per Cent in Two Weeks Time

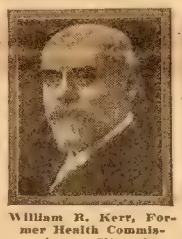
CHICAGO'S FORMER HEALTH COMMISSIONER SAYS IT SHOULD BE USED IN EVERY HOSPITAL AND PRESCRIBED BY EVERY PHYSICIAN

Opinions of Dr. Howard James, late of the Manhattan State Hospital of New York, Dr. A. J. Newman, late Police Surgeon of the City of Chicago, Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, Visiting Surgeon, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York, and Other Physicians Who Have Tested Nuxated Iron in Their Own Private Practice.

NOW BEING USED BY OVER THREE MILLION PEOPLE ANNUALLY

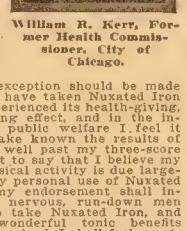
New York, N. Y.—It is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually in this country alone are taking Nuxated Iron. Such astonishing results have been reported from its use both by doctors and laymen that a number of physicians in various parts of the country have been asked to explain why they prescribe it so extensively, and why it apparently produces so much better results than were obtained from the old forms of inorganic iron. Extracts from some of the letters are given below. A special messenger was sent to interview the Former Health Commissioner of Chicago, Wm. R. Kerr, as it was known that he had personally used Nuxated Iron. Commissioner Kerr said:

"As Health Commissioner of the City of Chicago I was importuned many times to recommend different medicines, mineral waters, etc. Never yet have I gone on record as favoring any particular remedy, but I feel that in Nuxated Iron an exception should be made to the rule. I have taken Nuxated Iron myself and experienced its health-giving, strength-building effect, and in the interests of the public welfare I feel it my duty to make known the results of its use. I am well past my three-score years and want to say that I believe my own great physical activity is due largely to-day to my personal use of Nuxated Iron, and if my endorsement shall induce anaemic, nervous, run-down men and women to take Nuxated Iron, and receive the wonderful tonic benefits which I have received, I shall feel greatly gratified that I made an exception to my life-long rule in recommending it. From my own experience with Nuxated Iron I feel that it is such a valuable remedy that it ought to be used in every hospital and prescribed by every physician in this country."



William R. Kerr, Former Health Commissioner, City of Chicago.

In commenting on the above Dr. A. J. Newman, late Police Surgeon of the City of Chicago and former House Surgeon Jefferson Park Hospital, Chicago, said: "I heartily endorse everything Former Health Commissioner Kerr says about this remarkably efficacious preparation. It has been my particular duty during the past six years to assist in keeping Chicago's five thousand bluecoats in good health and perfect fighting trim so that they would be physically equipped to withstand all manner of storms and the ravages of nature's elements. Recently I was prompted through an endorsement of Nuxated Iron by Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, Visiting Surgeon, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York, to give it a trial. This remedy has proven through my own tests of it to excel any preparation I have ever used for creating red blood, building up the nerves, strengthening the muscles and correcting digestive disorders."

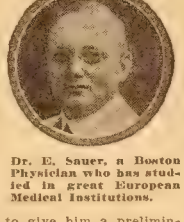


Dr. A. J. Newman, late Police Surgeon of the City of Chicago, and Former House Surgeon Jefferson Park Hospital, Chicago.

Dr. Howard James, late of the Manhattan State Hospital of New York, and formerly Assistant Physician, Brooklyn State Hospital, said: "Nuxated Iron is the most surprising remedy. A patient of mine remarked to me after having been on a six weeks' course of it: 'SAY, DOCTOR, THAT THERE STUFF IS LIKE MAGIC.' Previous to using Nuxated Iron I had been prescribing the various mineral salts of iron for years, only to meet complaints of discolored teeth, disturbed digestion, tied-up, hardened secretions, etc., when I came across Nuxated Iron, an elegant, ingenious preparation containing organic iron, which has no destructive action on the teeth—no corrosive effect on the stomach, and which is readily assimilated into the blood and quickly makes its presence felt in increased vigor, snap and staying power. It enriches the blood, brings roses to the cheeks of women, and is an unfailing source of renewed vitality, endurance and power to men who burn up too rapidly their nervous energy in the strenuous strain of the great business competition of the day."

Dr. Howard James, late of the Manhattan State Hospital of New York and formerly Assistant Physician, Brooklyn State Hospital.

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied both in this country and in great European Medical Institutions, says: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old, and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man—in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron—which had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health, at 46 he was careworn and nearly all in—now at 50, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his eyes beaming with the buoyancy of youth.



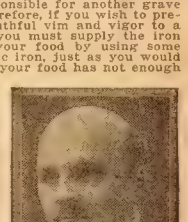
Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston Physician who has studied in great European Medical Institutions.

"Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good, and as a consequence you become weak, pale, and sickly-looking just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired; next take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray, while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for lack of iron."

Dr. Ferdinand King, New York Physician and Medical Author, says: "In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated cornmeal no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste-pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked, is responsible for another grave iron loss. Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe old age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt."

Dr. Ferdinand King, New York Physician and Medical Author.

Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, Visiting Surgeon, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York, said "I have never before given out any medical information, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the case of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty not to mention it, as I have taken it myself and given it to my patients with most surprising and satisfactory results. And those who wish quickly to increase their strength, power and endurance will find it a most remarkable and wonderfully effective remedy."



Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, Visiting Surgeon, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists, and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under sixty who lacks iron and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

Great Excitement.

"My! How I do admire a heroic man!" exclaimed Mrs. Argyl, gazing pensively at her husband.

"Did you see some movie actor at the matinee today, whose heroism made a hit with you?" asked Argyl.

"No, Henry," replied Mrs. Argyl; "I haven't been to the picture show since last evening. I don't know whether you understand my feeling or not, but ever since I was a girl I have hated the drab, monotonous existence that is void of all excitement. I long for unusual happenings that stir the imagination and fire the soul."

"What book was that stuff in?"

"It wasn't in any book, Henry."

"Then this nice, placid life that we are living doesn't appeal to you? I'm sorry for you. I don't need anything to stir my imagination. In fact, I don't want it stirred. I've just had a grand dinner of porterhouse steak smothered in onions. I put on my slippers and came in here to read the almanac the druggist gave me when I bought the stamp. Could any sane man ask more of life?"

"But nothing ever happens to change the even tenor, Henry. That's what palls on me, Henry. Why, we've been here nearly two years and have never even had a burglar scare, or a fire, or an awful fight next door or upstairs, where they'd smash the furniture and hurl expensive vases at the chandeliers, or anything else like that.

"My friend, Mrs. Argo, is much luckier that way. Of course, Argo is a live man. He is with her, heart and soul, in that kind of thing. Last week they had a burglar scare that she told me they wouldn't have missed for the world.

"It was in the dead of night that Mrs. Argo awoke and thought she heard the sound of shuffling feet. 'Lloyd,' she said, nudging her sleeping husband. 'I believe there's a burglar in the house.' Quick as a wink the brave man seized his revolver and crept downstairs, followed by Mrs. Argo, who held him in leash by the cord on his lounging robe. 'There's his flashlight!' she whispered, pointing to a point of light across the dining-room. Two shots rang out and their magnificent cut-glass punch bowl was shattered into a million fragments.

"Into the next room they crept. Somebody was standing in the corner silhouetted against the wall. 'Curses! I've got you now!' shrieked Argo, as he let four more shots snap. He switched on the lights and his wife gave a startled cry and fell in a swoon. He had riddled her papier mache dress form full of holes."

"My dear," said Argyl. "I can sympathize with you. If you have some cut glass and a dress form that you can spare, I'll provide the excitement."

"Oh, you men!" said Mrs. Argyl.

The Poor Veteran.

An Army officer said at a dinner: "The mutilated young heroes of the world war will be very finely treated for a few years; then afterward they will be treated no better, but probably worse, than anybody else.

"Look at our own Civil War veterans. Nothing very wonderful about their treatment, eh?

"I remember a Civil War veteran with one leg who went to Ocean Grove one summer. His bedroom was clean, but the bed was most uncomfortable and in the morning he said to his landlady:

"'I couldn't sleep last night, ma'am. The room was clean, but the bed was more uncomfortable than the rocky fields I used to sleep in on my campaigns. The bed, in fact, is unsteady, ma'am. It has only three legs.'

"'Only got three legs, eh?' sneered the landlady. 'Well, you old groucher, that's two more'n you've got.'"

Quite Unlikely.

A clever lawyer had a client named Michael Dougherty, who had been arrested for the illegal sale of liquor, but the police had no evidence except one pint of whisky, which they had found in his alleged kitchen barroom. In court this evidence was produced, and a somewhat vivid claim made of prima facie evidence of guilt by the prosecuting attorney.

During all this time the defendant's lawyer was silent. When his turn came for the defense he arose and said:

"Michael Dougherty, go into the witness box."

And Mike, with a big red nose, unshaven face, bleared eyes and a general appearance of dilapidation and dejection, took the stand.

"Michael Dougherty, look upon the jury. Gentlemen of the jury, look upon Michael Dougherty," said the lawyer. Then the lawyer himself silently and steadily gazed at Mike for a moment. Finally, with great deliberation and solemnity, the attorney turned to the jury and addressed it thus:

"Gentlemen of the jury, do you mean to say to this court and to me that you honestly and truly believe that Michael Dougherty, if he had a pint of whisky, would sell it?" And Mike was acquitted.

Classified Want Ads

Classified Want Ad Information

The rate for one insertion in Chicago Ledger and one insertion in The Saturday Blade is 30 cents a word, minimum 14 words, less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size of ad or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next

W. D. BOYCE CO., Publisher, 500 N. Dearborn St. CHICAGO, ILL.

SALESMEN WANTED

TRAVELING SALESMEN WANTED—Experience unnecessary. Earn while you learn. Hundreds of good positions open. Write today for large list of openings and testimonials from hundreds of members we have placed in positions paying $100 to $500 a month. Address nearest office, Dept. B-37, National Salesmen's Training Ass'n, Chicago, New York, San Francisco.

AGENTS WANTED

I WANT 100 MEN AND WOMEN TO ACT AS my agents and take orders for "Kantleak" raincoats. I paid Eli Bridge $58.95 for orders taken during his spare time in one week. Cooper made $314 last month. Wonderful values. A dandy coat for $3.95. Four average orders a day gives you $2500 a year profit and an automobile Free at the end of six months. No delivering or collecting. I'll give you a sample coat and complete outfit to use in getting orders. Hurry. Write for my liberal offer. Comer Mfg. Co., 13 Card St., Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS WANTED—TOLIVER PUNCTURE-Proof Inner Tubes sell easily — our agents make $5.00 to $20.00 a day net profit—no competition. Handle side line or establish business of your own with unlimited possibilities for profit write us for complete details. Toliver Tube & Tire Co., 514 Toliver Bldg., Denver, Colo.

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AGENTS, ATTENTION—HERE'S A BIG OP-portunity—for big profits—selling Gedwin Coolers. They keep perishable food cool without ice or mechanical appliances. Every home a prospect. Big selling season now here. Write today for particulars. Gedwin Co., 323 River St., Chicago.

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WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR— Soaps, extracts, perfumes, toilet goods. Experience unnecessary. Carnation Co., 26 S. Main, St. Louis.

AGENTS — I'VE A NEW SOAP GAME that's a dandy. New stuff; 100% profits. Sample and full layout free. Write quick. Lacassian Co., Dept. 21, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS WANTED—(Continued)

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AGENTS—MAKE A DOLLAR AN HOUR. Sell Mendets, a patent patch for instantly mending leaks in all utensils. Sample package free. Collette Mfg. Co., Dept. 707C, Amsterdam, N. Y.

FLAGS! FLAGS! FLAGS! ALL SIZES. Quick delivery. Big profits to agents. Act now! Demand for flags tremendous. Old Glory Flag Co., 10 Wall St., New York.

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CHIROPRACTIC DOCTORS MAKE LARGE incomes; our graduates earn $3,000 to $6,000 yearly; be independent; work for yourself; this big paying profession easily learned by correspondence; special rates now; illustrated book free. American University, Dept. 313, 162 N. Dearborn St., Chicago.

WANTED IMMEDIATELY — THOUSANDS men-women 18 or over, for U. S. Government jobs. War means many vacancies. $100 month. Steady work. Life appointment. Write for list positions. Franklin Institute, Dept. D39, Rochester, N. Y.

EVERY READER OF THE LEDGER OUGHT to read these ads. Every week splendid chances to make money—to better yourself—to buy, sell or exchange goods or services, are offered here.

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$35 WEEKLY COLLECTING NAMES AND addresses. Send stamp. Ursus Company, Dept. A2, Chicago, Ill.

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BRAKEMAN, FIREMAN, $90 TO $200 monthly; positions now open for inexperienced men. Application blank sent upon request. Write Superintendent, Box 506 A, Fresno, Calif.

$20.00 WEEKLY MADE WRITING NAMES at home for mail order houses; no canvassing; particulars for stamp. The Guide Co., Memphis, Tennessee.

NO STRIKE: 8 HOUR DAY. MEN EVERY-where, Firemen, brakemen, baggagemen, $120. Colored porters, experience unnecessary. 686 Railway Bureau, E. St. Louis, Ill.

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BE A DETECTIVE. EXCELLENT OPPOR-tunity, good pay, travel. Write C. T. Ludwig, 320 Westover Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

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$35.00 PROFIT NIGHTLY, SMALL CAPITAL starts you. No experience needed. Our machines are used and endorsed by Government institutions. Catalog free. Atlas Moving Picture Co., Franklin Bldg., Chicago.

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SEND US YOUR IDEAS FOR PHOTOPLAYS, stories, etc. We accept them in any form suspect. Personal co-operation. Big rewards. Make money. Get details now. Writer's Selling Service, Dept. 10, Auburn, N. Y.

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VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA FARMS $15 per acre and up. Easy payments. Fruit, dairy, stock, climate, schools, churches, roads, markets and neighbors of the best. Get our farm lists, magazine and other interesting literature all free. Address F. H. LaBaume, Agrl. Agt., N. & W. Ry., 248 N. & W. Bldg., Roanoke, Va.

FARMS WANTED

WANTED—HEAR FROM OWNER GOOD farm for sale. Cash price, description. D. F. Bush, Minneapolis, Minn.

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INVESTORS MAGAZINE FREE TO YOU, $10 invested with us has made others $290.00 in few months. "Hoffman's Investment Journal" tells how this was done. This magazine gives facts about the real earning power of money. Tells how many have started on the road to fortune. We will send it three months free. If you want to make money, write for this magazine today. Hoffman Trust Company, 677 Carter Building, Houston, Texas.

FREE SAMPLE COPY FINANCIAL IN-structor—"Le Paper With a Policy"—it contains investment news of all lines of industry. It has an Investors' Aid Department which gives real service. Financial Instructor, 1550 North American Bldg., Chicago.

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UNDERGROUND TREASURES—HOW AND where to find them; particulars for stamp. Model Co., Morton Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

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PATENTS SECURED OR FEE RETURNED. Actual search and patentability report free. Send sketches and description, or model, of your invention. My patent sales service gets full value. 1917 edition ninety-page patent book free. George P. Kimmel, 260 Barrister Building, Washington, D. C.

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TOBACCO HABIT CURED BY HARMLESS recipe. Sent free. Superba Co., FA, Baltimore, Md.

PERSONAL

SUFFERERS FROM NERVOUS, WEAK, run down conditions should take Juven Pills. They accomplish marvelous results. This medicine has more rejuvenating, vitalizing force than has ever before been offered. Sent postpaid only on receipt of this advertisement and $1. Geo. W. Hood Co., proprietors Hood's Sarsaparilla, Lowell, Mass. (Z.R.)

MEN ON THE DOWN GRADE, REMEMBER we cure varicocele, stricture, chronic, nervous, blood, kidney, bladder and private diseases. Book symptom blank and advice free, sealed. Hinze Medical Institute, 23 Washington Ave. So., Minneapolis, Minn.

MARRY RICH. BE HAPPY AND PROSPER-ous. Big list of descriptions and photos of congenial people with means free. Sealed, confidential. Either sex. Standard Club, Box 607, Grayslake, Ill.

MARRY—FREE PHOTOS, BEAUTIFUL ladies; descriptions and directory; pay when married. New Plan Co., Dept. 21, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—MARRIAGE DIRECTORY WITH photos and description free. Pay when married. The Exchange, Dept. 28, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY: THOUSANDS WEALTHY ANX-ious to marry at once. All ages, nationalities, religion; descriptions free. People's Club, Box 4, San Diego, Cal.

MAGIC WORDS! SECRET, SURE METHOD of obtaining anything you want. Postpaid for dime. Lida Smedley, 151 Miller, Brooklyn, N. Y.

LADY, WORTH $35,000, LONELY, WILL marry honorable gentleman. Write quick. Sincere, 243 N. Coronado, Los Angeles, Cal.

GET MARRIED—BIG PAPER WITH ALL names, addresses, descriptions, photos 25c. Wren, 45, Grand Rapids, Mich.

GET MARRIED — BEST MATRIMONIAL paper published. Mailed free. The Correspondent, Toledo, Ohio.

MARRY RICH. HUNDREDS ANXIOUS TO marry. Descriptions and photos free. E. Unity, Grand Rapids, Mich.

"REAL PHOTOS, BATHING GIRLS, STUDIO models, fascinating poses. Sample 10c. Simpson Co., Wheeling, W. Va."

WANT TO MARRY RICH? IF SO, WRITE to C. A. Rowell, Box 160, Chicago, Ill.

Chicago Ledger

Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1895, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

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By W. D. BOYCE CO., CHICAGO, ILL.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscriptions to the Chicago Ledger by mail $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, in advance. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Postoffice or Express Money Order, payable to the Chicago Ledger. The address tab on your paper shows the date to which your subscription is paid.

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5,000,000

READERS WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

What can't be cured should be insured.

It is good to be wise, but it is wiser to be good.

Life is worth living better than most men live it.

Go out of your way to do a favor and make a friend.

Man is made of dust and he wants the rest of the earth.

Mistaking flattery for friendship is a very human error.

Once a hero always a hero—especially to the hero himself.

Silent watches of the night are those people forget to wind

If you have occasion to criticise a mule, do it to his face.

It is no use to hurry if you are going in the wrong direction.

He who pursues two rabbits will succeed in catching neither.

A dead lion is better than a live dog—for rug-making purposes

An eloquent prayer doesn't get any higher than the other kind.

Closing your eyes to your own faults does not close other people's

If you find yourself in the right place at the right time don't quarrel with your luck.

Some people appreciate beautiful things, but most people merely care for ornaments.

She is a wise woman who knows where her waist line will be after the next new styles come in.

Lots of people who have opinions but no convictions ought to be convicted for having such opinions.

A red-haired woman has as much right to call her hair golden as a fat woman has to call herself plump.

Marriage is sometimes a failure because a man is unable to think of the right excuse at the right time.

An impolite man is one who always butts in and begins to talk about himself when you are talking about yourself.

When a girl sits down to dinner and tackles a juicy steak smothered in onions it's a sign she isn't worrying over love affairs

Careful wives who habitually make up their husbands' minds refine the process until they attain the most satisfactory results

Don't place too much confidence in a man who boasts of being as honest as the day is long. Wait until you meet him at night

If a man has the right kind of stuff in him it doesn't matter whether he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth or an iron ladle.

Home and Health

FASHION NOTES.

Colored handkerchief linen boleros are seen on white net blouses.

Now the fiber silk knitted scarf belts may be bought separately. They are made in brilliant Roman stripes and in solid colors, framing bands of Dresden and Japanese patterns.

The newest sport models are made with rather narrow skirts, often of a material contrasting with that of the smock, or belted blouse and this last is cut in a deep oval at the neck. The opening is usually outlined with a band of the skirt material, which also makes the sash and the cuffs

FOR THE HOUSEWIFE.

A little kerosene will remove finger-marks from white wood.

It is a question whether very much making over of dresses is genuine economy.

Don't forget to close the refrigerator door each time it is used. It will save ice.

Cheap quilts, made and filled no one knows where, are very doubtful things to have in the family. It is far better to make them of clean cheap materials at home.

The best way to clean hair brushes is with spirits of ammonia. No rubbing is required and cold water can be used just as successfully as warm. Take a teaspoonful of ammonia to a quart of water and dip in the hair part of the brush without wetting the wood; then rinse in cold water, shake the brush well and dry in the air, but not in the sun. Soda and soap soften the bristles.

NEEDLEWORK NOTES.

One will find that by darning stockings diagonally across the weave instead of with it, the stitches will give as the stocking stretches and are not as apt to pull away from the edges. This method is especially good to use where stitches have dropped.

Women who have no inclination to embroider large articles should feel encouraged to join the field of embroiderers, just at present, since the vogue of the embroidered medallion is so strong. And, too, since the stitches that are easiest made and most effective are in fashion. On squares, ovals or circles of material you can embroider the most weird, the most artistic or the most geometrical of designs, using a combination of bright colors for the purpose. And as for the materials used to bring forth these designs, one is not limited, for there are straw, cotton, silk, wool, beads and chenille at one's service. Braiding designs are also very modish and can be worked out in quick time. As a rule the background of the medallion is of a color that is in strong contrast with the dress, hat or bag on which it is used.

HEALTH NOTES.

Try to pass at least two hours out of doors every day. Walk when there is no other recreation possible.

A small portion of alum boiled with milk and used to rinse the mouth will put a stop to an aching tooth, but do not swallow the liquid.

Rochelle salts is an old-fashioned remedy which physicians are recommending again because of its simple efficiency and modest price. A teaspoonful is taken in warm water once a day on rising. This agent cleanses the system and has a wonderful effect on clearing the complexion and imparting the glow of health

A few drops of plain lemon juice make an excellent and economical tooth wash, as it not only removes tartar, but sweetens the breath. We all know that lemon rind is a skin whitener and bleacher, but few of us know that a splendid manicure acid may be made by adding a teaspoonful of lemon juice to a cup of warm water. This removes stains from the nails and loosens the cuticle more satisfactorily than instruments.

To avoid spring colds, keep the house cool. Cool air in motion stimulates and tones up the circulation. Take a cold bath every morning, or at least a cold sponge, followed by brisk rubbing with a rough towel. This is a fine tonic and good preventive of colds. Wear sufficient, but not too heavy underclothing. A little vigorous exercise each day will improve the circulation and enable the body to ward off colds. Observe moderation in eating and drinking, as colds in the head follow lowered vitality due to various causes.

RECIPES.

VEGETABLE RAGOUT—Put one cup each sliced turnips, potatoes and carrots into boiling water. Cook till tender. Melt two tablespoons of butter in another pan, stir into it one-half cup of minced onion and fry brown. Add two tablespoons browned flour and gradually one pint of hot water. When smooth turn contents of saucepan into it, season to taste with salt and pepper, cook slowly thirty minutes, dish and serve. Just before sending to table sprinkle a tablespoon of minced parsley over it.

OXFORD SALAD—Small leaves of lettuce, three to each guest. On each a slice of orange, cut not too thin. On each slice of orange place a strip of canned red sweet pepper. Over all pour a dressing made of the juice from ends of oranges, a little of the pepper liquor and plenty of salt. Very pretty and so good!

CODFISH AND CHEESE—Soak a pound of codfish six hours in tepid water, then let it come to a boil. When cold, pick into flakes with a fork and season with pepper. Heat a cup of milk to a boil, stir into it a teaspoon of butter rolled in two of prepared flour. Mix with the picked fish and pour into a baking dish. Strew grated cheese thickly on top and bake in a quick oven to a delicate brown. It is yet nicer if you add a raw egg before cooking it. Something real new.

DELICIOUS DESSERT—Three oranges, four English walnuts, eight marshmallows, one-half pint cream. Sweeten to taste. To make: Peel and cut oranges into small cubes, lightly cover with granulated sugar, two hours before using. Just before serving place oranges in bowl, a layer of nuts, first cut in halves. Next layer, marshmallows. Cream sweetened and whipped as top layer.

BEAN ROLL—This is a good way to use left-over beans. To one cup of baked beans add one cup cheese and one cup of bread crumbs. Put all thru the meat grinder. Season well and bake in a loaf one-half to three-quarters of an hour.

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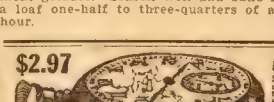
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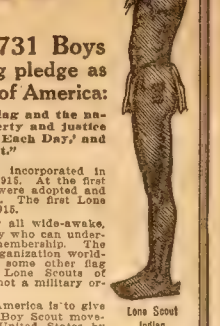
191,731 LONE SCOUTS


Lone Scout Indian

In 84 Weeks 191,731 Boys have taken the following pledge as members of Lone Scouts of America:

"I pledge my allegiance to my flag and the nation for which it stands, with liberty and justice for all. I will 'Do a Useful Thing Each Day,' and be worthy of the name, Lone Scout."

MEMBERSHIP BADGE

FIRST DEGREE BADGE (Bronze)

SECOND DEGREE BADGE (Bronze)

THIRD DEGREE BADGE (Silver)

The Lone Scouts of America was incorporated in Washington, District of Columbia, in 1915. At the first meeting of the incorporators, by-laws were adopted and W. D. Boyce was elected Chief Totem. The first Lone Scout took the pledge on October 25, 1915.

1 The Lone Scouts of America is for all wide-awake, ambitious boys everywhere. Any boy who can understand the pledge is eligible to membership. The pledge is so worded as to make the organization world-wide, including any boy living under some other flag than the United States flag. The Lone Scouts of America encourages patriotism, but is not a military organization in any sense.

2 The purpose of the Lone Scouts of America is to give the boys all the advantages of the Boy Scout movement (which was started in the United States by W. D. Boyce, Chief Totem of the Lone Scouts) while permitting them to operate alone if it is not convenient for them to belong to Tribes. Woodcraft and Scouting are only a part of the instructions. The Lone Scout motto is: "Do a Useful Thing Each Day." Every boy who lives up to this motto is going to be a successful man.

3 There are no membership dues or fees to pay; no expensive equipment for boys or their parents to buy. The Lone Scouts of America is not a money-making proposition. The organization is supported by the sale of its weekly magazine, "Lone Scout," in which instructions are given the Scouts. "Lone Scout" is sold by agents for 3 cents a copy. Subscription rates, 25 cents four months, 75 cents a year.

4 As a member progresses in his Scout work he is awarded Degrees with appropriate Badges, and these Degrees make up Lodges. Badges of the first three Degrees (Tepee Lodge) are shown on the left. After the Tepee Lodge comes the Totem Pole Lodge. A member in this Lodge is entitled to put up a Lone Scout Totem Pole, upon which is placed a record of his Degrees.

5 In applying for membership, fill out the Application Blank given below, and send it with 2-cent stamp.

W. D. BOYCE, Chief Totem,
500 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

CUT OUT HERE

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP F

CHIEF TOTEM, 500 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Date..... 1917

I am ready, with consent of my parents or guardian, to take the Lone Scout Pledge, which I have read. Herewith find 2 cents in stamps to pay for mailing Certificate of Membership in the Lone Scouts of America, First Degree Instructions and Tribe Booklet.

Name..... Age.....

Town..... State.....

St. No., P. O., or R. F. D.....

King's Mountain Boys

Or, Under Liberty's Banner

By Captain Jack Judson

[Copyright 1917 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

CHAPTER I.

"WASHINGTON AND LIBERTY."

OVER a well-defined mountain road fringed with trees wearing the rich hues of early autumn, a boy and a girl were riding side by side on a pair of wiry-looking little horses. It was getting late in the afternoon, and a number of woodland birds had already sought their homes in the oaks and pines, and the little brown owl in the depths of the forest was sending forth his first screechy calls.

The youth was a lad of 16, well built and good looking, for his eyes were bright and his cheeks were tan, showing the results of a free life among the hills. He wore a buckskin jacket with fringes and leggings of the same material, and carried a slender rifle across the pommel of his saddle. His companion was also a product of the mountains who sat her small steed well, resting her hands lightly on the reins whilst the breezes toyed with her brown locks which drifted over her shoulder.

The mountain way was wide enough for both horses, tho they were compelled to keep close together, and now and then they nibbled playfully at each other's ears.

"What is your latest news, Ethan?" suddenly asked the girl, turning to her companion.

"You mean the invasion, of course?"

"Yes, the oncoming of Ferguson and his horde."

Ethan Byrd looked away for a moment and then answered, "I shall be able to tell you more by tomorrow."

"But he is marching northward?"

"Yes. He seems bent on joining Earl Cornwallis at Charlotte. It is said that he has been sending couriers to his chief, but we hope to intercept some of these." The young Rebel spoke in confident tone.

"It is this way, as you may know, Helen," he proceeded. "We were terribly whipped at Camden. Gates was scattered to the four winds on that field by the British, the enemy have subdued South Carolina, they have driven the Swamp Fox to his covert, and now Cornwallis has invaded our colony to bring it into subjection. That is why he has ordered Ferguson with his regulars and Tories to invade these parts and commit all sorts of outrages. But the mountain men are rising." The boy's face glowed with unmistakable pleasure. "They are determined to hunt Colonel Ferguson and teach him a needed lesson."

"I am glad of that, Ethan!" exclaimed Helen Boyce, the only daughter of a prominent Whig family. "If we only could chastise this man Ferguson it would make up for Camden——"

"And mayhap turn the tide of war," interrupted Ethan.

"Yes. But the other day, so the old scout, Jason, said, some of these Tory rascals commanded by Captain Rough, as we call him, invaded the Narrow Creek district and burned the home of a lone widow."

"I heard of that act," Ethan answered. "There is coming a day of judgement for the King's men. But here we separate."

They had reached a spot in the road where trails crossed, and the young patriot reined in his animal.

"Are you not going to a rendezvous?" asked the girl, laying her hand lightly on her companion's sleeve.

"We have a little meeting tonight."

"Beware! The land is full of spies. If you are seen or overheard by one of these people, you boys may be visited by Captain Rough or by Ferguson himself."

"I fancy we will be on the lookout," replied Ethan, with a toss of his head. "We are as careful as can be. I will try to ride by your house tomorrow and acquaint you of any news I may bear at the meeting."

With this the pair separated, and the girl, riding straight ahead, saw her friend disappear down the narrower way where the trees grew tall and dense.

The boy partisan kept on till the night was fairly upon him, but his little horse picked his way along the now invisible trail until all at once he seemed to perceive the cabin which arose before him.

"We are here, Dick," said Ethan, guiding the animal to the very door of the structure. "Perhaps we may soon have more news of the invasion."

Ethan now dismounted, and, throwing the loose reins over his arm, approached the cabin, which was built of heavy logs and had but one window, which was boarded up. A noise suddenly fell upon the youth's ears.

"Who comes there?" was spoken in low, cautious tones.

"Washington and Liberty!" answered Ethan and the response was not long delayed.

"Advance, friend!" said a voice, the owner of which the sharp eyes of Ethan had now singled out.

A moment later two boys stood face to face before the forest retreat.

"You're the first to arrive, Ethan. The others will come soon, I trust. What late news have you?"

"None since yesterday."

"No news of Ferguson?"

"None except that he is still advancing."

"Getting deeper into the mountain trap!" exclaimed the other boy, Allan Weston. "Wait! Here comes some one else."

Four darkish figures that approached the hut were challenged as Ethan had been, and one replied with the countersign, and when the animals had been taken to a little gully near the rendezvous, all six entered the cabin itself.

One of the boys struck a light with his tinder box, and a tallow candle fastened to a sharp nail in one of the logs threw a ghostly light around.

The young mountaineers were habited alike, and all carried the slender rifles of the day. The old hut was devoid of furniture; in fact, it had had no regular tenants for many months, for the last one had been hanged for being true to liberty, and because of this act the place had been avoided by the superstitious country folk.

It was on this account an ideal place for a secret meeting, and the youthful liberty league had chosen it for this very purpose. The strong door was secured on the inside by a stout iron chain, and the lone window was reinforced with boards taken from the floor.

There was a look of determination on the face of each of the six boys which told that they were alive to the dangers of their meeting. They had seen enough of British rule in the Southern colonies to instill into their young hearts the love of liberty and resistance to oppression in all its forms.

They had been bred among the mountains, had hunted wild game wherever it was to be found, but now they were to hunt larger game in the shape of an invading army under the banners of King George and to teach his generals that, boys tho they were, they were not to be despised as enemies.

Ethan Byrd was the head of the mountain league, and had accepted its stern responsibilities, knowing that, as the saying went those days, he had "placed his head in a noose."

After all were ensconced in the hut Ethan, standing in the light of the candle, addressed his companions:

"We must devise some means of intercepting some of the couriers who are passing between Ferguson and Cornwallis. By doing this we render our cause a great service. Jason says they pass thru Red Fox Gorge, crossing the river a little distance below. They may be on the road even now."

"The ford is a good place to watch for them," upspoke one of the boys, Paul Sumter by name. "Jason is a cunning scout and knows a messenger when he sees one."

"Where is Captain Rough?" asked Allan.

"He was near Nollichucky when last reported, but he is liable to turn up anywhere with his band of marauders," answered Ethan.

"If we could only catch this scourge—"

"But the couriers first," put in the leader of the mountain league. "We want to know what is passing between Cornwallis and Ferguson. This is highly important."

"Ethan is right," said Allan. "These mounted men will cross the ford at night——"

"Or even by daylight if they are well disguised. They are evidently Loyalists who know every foot of the country and all the inhabitants thereof."

"To the ford, then!" exclaimed one of the boys who had not spoken till now.

"We will wait a while for Jason," Ethan said. "I told him when I last saw him that we would have a meeting tonight and should be glad to have his report."

"But Jason may not come, and the couriers may escape us."

It was resolved to wait for the person called Jason, a man who was an ardent partisan and the best scout in the district. He had been repeatedly hunted by Captain Rough, but the old liberty-loving fox had eluded his foes and was still out of the trap.

Suddenly the boys started and seized their rifles which they had leaned against the logs. A suspicious sound had fallen upon their trained ears. Was it man or mountain beast?

Ethan went cautiously to the window and listened. He made a sign with his hand as he moved to the door, which was opened, and the following moment he had slipped out into the night. His companions awaited his return with many misgivings.

For a minute the young patriot remained near the door, and then he glided away, his feet making not the slightest noise on the leaf-flecked ground.

Overhead towered the ghostly trees by which the hut was surrounded. A low wind rustled the unseen branches, and from far away came to the ears of the daring boy the dismal hoot of an owl.

At once there came to Ethan Byrd the sound of a footstep. It was not the tread of the mountain wolf nor the lope of the fox. The boy hugged the darkness and waited.

Now and then he caught the gleam of the stars that studded the autumn sky, but he had no eye for them. The noise ceased for a moment and was then renewed. The boy with every sense on the alert knew that the footstep boded the cause of liberty no good.

He stood like a statue in his tracks with his hands on the rifle which was held in readiness, and at last he knew that some one had passed him and was at the window of the hut. A spy was doing his work almost within arms' reach of him.

Ethan turned noiselessly back. When he paused he could hear the deep breathings of some one. In an instant he had made up his mind what to do. The exact location of the window was well known to him. A bound would bring him to it.

The young partisan placed his weapon against a tree and braced himself for a spring. In another moment his lithe body had shot thru the air and landed on something that sent forth a cry and fell away from the window. Ethan was not to be robbed of his quarry, for he threw his arms about a human form and bore it to the ground.

A moment later the door of the hut was thrown wide and its tenants were at Ethan's side.

"Whom have you captured, Ethan?" exclaimed Allan, as he found and pinioned to the ground a pair of arms which were not his companion's

"Some spy of the King's."

Ethan's enemy was dragged inside the hut, and the moment the light of the candle fell upon him every boy exclaimed in unison:

"Tommy Lutz!"

It was not a man whom Ethan had captured, but a stoutly built and somewhat rough-looking youth of 17, who snarled like a mountain wolf when he surveyed the band into whose hands he had fallen.

"This is pretty business, Master Lutz," said Ethan, staring at the Tory youth.

"And it's also pretty business you boys are engaged in," was the quick retort. "Let me up and I'll talk."

"You'll talk where you are if at all," was the response.

Tommy's lips came together with malignance and he lapsed into stubborn silence. Before he was assisted to his feet he was bound with cords that held his hands in thrall, and then he was stood against the logs where the candlelight fell full on his unhandsome face.

"Who sent you out tonight?" demanded Ethan.

"That's my own business."

"But some one sent you."

"Find him," snapped Master Lutz, with a malicious grin.

"I guess we wouldn't have to hunt long," Ethan answered. "You serve David Meccam, the biggest Tory of the district, and he is hand-in-glove with the enemies of freedom. Do you know what we ought to do with you, Master Lutz?"

There was no reply. The old snarl came back to the prisoner's lips, and he gazed silently at the boys of the liberty league. At last he found his tongue.

"You know what will happen if you harm a hair of Tommy Lutz!" he said threateningly.

The young liberty lovers exchanged rapid glances.

"To whom were you to report, Tommy?" Ethan inquired.

"That's my affair, Master Byrd."

"We are apt to make it ours, as well," threatened Ethan. "You have a good cord, Allan?"

"There's one on my saddle," and Allan moved toward the door.

"Don't, for mercy's sake!" cried the prisoner at this juncture, as he paled. "You know I have to do as I am told. I——"

"You've had your orders, then?"

"Yes, Master Byrd."

"From David Meccam?"

"From my master."

"I thought so!" exclaimed Ethan, with

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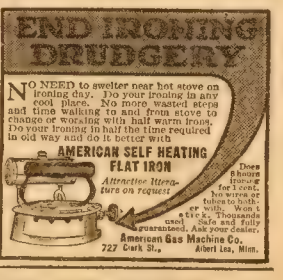
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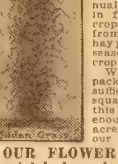

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a smile. "You tracked some of us tonight?"

Tommy nodded, but did not speak.

"If we go no further will you take the oath against the King?"

"What, against King George?" and a tremor was seen to sweep over the prisoner's frame. "You are asking too much, Master Byrd. I am a King's man, like my master. I could never go back to him if I turned against King George."

"But you need not go back to him," Ethan replied quickly. "There is safety for you across the mountain. Master Meccam, the arrant Tory, would never seek you there."

"But when the King conquers his rebellious colonies, what would become of me?"

"King George is never going to conquer us!" cried Ethan, with a defiant toss of his head. "We are going to win our independence, no matter how many redcoats land on our shores."

"But look what Earl Cornwallis did to Gates at Camden."

"That is but a setback," Ethan responded. "Look what Washington did to Rael at Trenton and what Gates did to Burgoyne at Saratoga. What is your answer, Master Lutz?"

There was no mercy to be seen in the eyes of the boys of liberty, and the young Tory feared the doom with which he was threatened.

"If I take the oath," he gasped, "I won't turn Rebel."

"We don't ask you to do that. Get out of the district and keep a still tongue in your head."

Master Lutz dropped his head on his breast and asked for the oath of silence, which Ethan administered with all the solemnity he could assume.

In another instant the bonds of the young prisoner were severed and he was told to go. He looked once more at his captors; Allan opened the door, and the Tory youth disappeared.

"We'll hear from Master Lutz again," said Paul, with a glance at his companions. "That isn't the last of David Meccam's slave."

"We'll wait and see," answered Ethan. "We will wait no longer for Jason, so now for the ford."

With the last word the leader of the young patriot league snuffed the dripping candle on the wall, and the interior of the forest rendezvous swam in darkness.

CHAPTER II.

A TORY'S DAUGHTER.

NOT far from the banks of the Broad River, and near the place where it crosses the line which divides the two Carolinas, stood the home of David Meccam, the Tory. It was a fine large mansion with many rooms, and three white columns in front, after the manner of Colonial houses of that day. It occupied a rise of ground which overlooked some magnificent scenery, and from the porch a view of the distant mountains was to be had.

It was the beginning of October in the year 1780, and the surrounding landscape was just tipped with russet hues which rendered the region most beautiful.

King George never had a more zealous friend than David Meccam. He was ever ready to do his King a favor, and Earl Cornwallis knew that he had but to ask to receive anything he wished at Meccam's hands, if he were in a position to bestow it. If the Tory had a friend among the King's men, every Whig was his enemy, for David was known far and wide as a supporter of the crown, and more than once he had harbored the very men who had devastated the mountain region in the name of the English sovereign.

The Tory kept around him those who were always ready to do his bidding, no matter what it was; he ruled his slaves with a hand of iron, and while they hated him because of his rule, none had ever been known to betray him.

Such was the man who had sent Tommy Lutz out to spy upon the boys of liberty, for they had been suspected of plotting against the King, and the Tory was determined to circumvent them by every means in his power.

His household consisted of a wife and two children, a boy and a girl, the latter in her seventeenth year, while the son was a trifle younger. The Tory believed that his children were as much attached to the royal cause as himself, but the time had come for him to be undeceived so far as his daughter Naomi was concerned.

The march of Ferguson into North Carolina with fifteen hundred regulars and Tories had spread excitement everywhere. As we have heard Ethan Byrd say, Cornwallis had subdued South Carolina and had pushed north into the adjoining colony. He had defeated Gates, the victor of Saratoga, at Camden, almost destroying his force, and his boast was that in a few weeks he would have the whole South at his feet.

If Cornwallis had not permitted his men to inflict all sorts of brutality upon the Whigs it would not have been so bad, but he permitted Tarleton and Ferguson to hang the patriots whenever they pleased, and these acts had turned the mountaineers against him.

It was the same night that witnessed the capture of Tommy Lutz by Ethan and his companions, and David Meccam was anxiously waiting for the spy's return. Tommy had never failed his master, for he knew what failure meant, and the Tory had the utmost confidence in his tool.

David was ensconced in a large armchair in one of the spacious front rooms of the house on the rise. The hands of the old-fashioned clock at one side of the apartment pointed to ten, and the gaze of the loyalist had more than once roved to the dial within the last hour.

"What in the world keeps the young rascal?" he exclaimed. "The young Rebels haven't turned the tables on him, I hope? Woe to them if they harm a hair of Tommy's head! If they do I'll rake the district as with a fine-toothed comb but what I catch every one of them."

He left his chair and began to pace the room with the men of a caged lion. He was a ponderous man, and the stout floor seemed to tremble beneath his tread. The clock struck the half-hour, and no Tommy Lutz.

"I'll see about this!" cried the exasperated Tory. "Where is Caesar?"

He stamped back to the table in the middle of the room and picked up a little bell which he jangled furiously. The door was opened, and a black head was thrust inside.

"I want Caesar," said David, and settled back in the chair.

The slave disappeared, and presently a black man, lithe as a half-starved wolf of the mountain, made his appearance.

"You know the mountain trails, Caesar?" asked the Tory, looking sharply at the servant.

"Caesar knows them all, master."

"I thought so. Get out the black horse and ride down to the lower ford. Don't be afraid of Rebels, for they won't hurt you. I sent Tommy on a certain mission. He was to stop at Master Dunn's on the way back. See if you can hear of him."

"Yes, sah."

"Go, now—right away, and don't let any grass grow under the old black's feet."

Once more the master of the plantation was alone, but not for long. The whinny of a horse assailed his ears, there was the sound of feet on the porch, and the door opened.

A man dressed as a countryman, but yet with a soldierly air, stamped into the room. The two exchanged glances, and Meccam knew whom he faced.

"It's beastly riding in a strange country," cried the man, as he came forward, shaking some mud from his shoes. "I haven't lost my way, I reckon?"

"That depends whither you are bound," answered David, eying him closely.

The stranger cast a furtive glance around the room.

"Oh, you can speak out," the Tory said. "We're alone. I permit no eavesdropping under my roof."

"I'm going down to Ferguson," the other replied.

"And you come from the Earl?"

"Yes, from the Earl at Charlotte."

"I thought so. No, you haven't lost your way, but you must be careful in this region. It swarms with Rebels."

"So I've heard," observed the British courier, with a grim smile. "If they should catch me they might do more than rob me?"

"Indeed they might," answered Meccam. "These rascally Whigs don't fight according to the rules of civilized warfare. But how goes it with my dear friend, the Earl?"

"Swimmingly," said the courier, "but he is deaperately anxious about Ferguson. He has heard that the mountain men are rising in the northwest——"

"I've heard that, too," interrupted David, "but I hope to have some news presently. You seem to have had a time getting here?"

"Yes," smiled the courier. "My horse fell with me on one of your byroads and threw me over his head. It was a miracle that I recaptured him in the darkness."

"And you're hungry, no doubt?"

The Tory picked up the bell again, and its tones summoned another servant, whom he ordered to bring in some refreshments for his visitor.

He and the messenger were scarcely alone again when sounds of loud talking in an adjoining hallway reached their ears.

"I'll think as I please," said one of the voices, which was pitched in a rather high and determined key. "I don't care what father says. I don't sanction the sort of campaign the royal troops are making in the district."

"I'll just lead you into his presence and show him a little Rebel in the King's household."

In another moment the door leading into the parlor was thrown open, and a youth appeared, viciously leading a young girl by the ear.

They were the Tory's children, Marcus and Naomi.

"What's the matter now?" exclaimed David Meccam, staring at the scene brought suddenly forward for his inspection. "Let go of Naomi's ear, you young scamp."

"It needs pinching," was the reply. "What do you think of a Meccam talking rank treason?"

"It's impossible, that's what I think," answered the Tory, with a swift look at the astonished courier. "I never heard of such a thing."

"Neither did I till a while ago," Marcus replied. "She said it. I heard her with my own ears. She berated Earl Cornwallis and even the King himself."

The Tory turned full upon Naomi, whose face was highly colored and whose eyes flashed with a singular light.

"What did you say, daughter?" he asked.

Naomi cast her eyes to the carpet, but did not speak.

"Oh, she needn't deny it," put in the brother. "You might have heard her if you had been listening."

"For one thing I don't want to listen to treason in this house. This gentleman," he glanced at the courier, "is near to the Earl, and I have just had news from Charlotte. But what did you say, Naomi?"

For the first time since entering the room the girl met her father's gaze.

"Marcus has told you," she said.

"What? That you are unfriendly to the King?"

"If he sanctions such work as his soldiers have been doing in the South, I am, father."

"Marry me, this is treason!" cried David Meccam, stamping his foot in an outburst of anger. "I will not have it. We've got to subdue these Rebels, if every limb in North America bears human fruit."

"That's what I told her," said Marcus. "That it is not warfare," said Naomi, looking at her parent. "The King's men have been burning the homes of the Whigs, they have hanged the parents, and little children have been left to starve. They have driven off stock and insulted the people in every way. Does King George approve of all this?"

"He means to put down this rebellion, no matter what it costs!" almost roared the Tory of the hill. "So, my little Rebel, you don't like the Earl's way?"

"I do not!" cried Naomi, as her dark eyes flashed.

"And you have expressed your opinion in your father's house?"

"I have told Marcus."

"What do you think of all this?" and Meccam turned to the silent, but observing courier.

"I certainly did not expect to hear of such sentiments in your house," was the reply.

"It is simply monstrous!" and the Tory rose from the chair and seemed to tower like a giant above his child. "I will harbor no Rebels. I draw the line at treason, no matter from whom it emanates. Is the roan mare in the stable, Marcus?"

"Yes, sir."

"She belongs to Naomi. I gave her to the girl when the little nag came into my hands. That is all the part she has from this moment in the house of Meccam."

Naomi's face went very pale, but she did not lift her eyes.

"Take your portion and go, girl," Meccam continued as sternly as before. "Go to your own kind, and they are those who plot treason against the King."

Slowly and still with bowed head the beautiful young girl turned away. In the silence that filled the room the fall of a feather might almost have been heard.

"Saddle Bess for Naomi," said the Tory, breaking the stillness.

"No!" cried the girl, as she drew herself to her full height at the open door. "Don't any of you touch Bess. She is all I have in this world now, and so long as she lives the hand that defends King George shall not rest upon her bridle rein!"

With these impassioned words the figure of Naomi vanished and the door banged behind her.

They could hear the Tory's daughter stamping thru the hall, they caught the sounds of her feet on the porch beyond,

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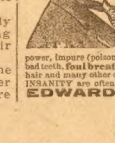

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and then the noise trailed off into dead silence. Presently Marcus slipped from the room, but in a few minutes he came back.

"She took you at your word," the youth said, addressing his father, who had uttered scarcely a word since his departure.

"What, did she really take the mare?"

"Yes. Jethro says she led the mare from the stables already saddled, and rode away."

"Good riddance!" said the Tory. "I won't have traitors in my house. You can tell Earl Cornwallis this."

The courier bowed.

"Oh, she'll come back," smiled the Loyalist, as he continued. "But she'll find the house barred against her unless she retracts her treason. She'll be whining at the door before the end of a fortnight."

"But he looked determined, Master Meccam."

"It was half put on. She daren't go to the Whigs, for they hate her because she is Meccam's girl, and the homes of the King's people in North Carolina won't be open to her. She's a bird without a homing nest, and she'll recant before long."

Half an hour later Meccam the Tory bade adieu to Cornwallis' courier on the porch, and sent his respects by him to Colonel Ferguson, after which he went back into the house to wait for Caesar's return.

It was almost midnight before the slave put in an appearance.

"Fo' de land o' mercy! I see'd a ghost, master!" were the black's first words when he burst into the room.

"Nonsense! I told you to keep such things out of your head."

"But it was a ghost that looked jes' like de young missus, an' I thought she was mounted on roan Bess."

There was a sudden start on Meccam's part, and his hands quavered.

"Where did you see the ghost?" he asked.

"It was down at de turn o' de road whar it strikes out fo' de ford."

"So she went in that direction?" soliloquised the Tory just above his breath. "She's breaking for the Rebel part of the district sure enough." Then his face lit up with another expression. "Did you hear anything of Tommy?" he asked, leaning forward.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At Massa Dunn's."

"Oh, he was there?" cried Meccam. "Why hasn't he come back?"

"He jes' ain't comin' back any mo'. Dat's what he said to Massa Dunn."

David Meccam grasped the arms of his chair and seemed to sink his fingers into its mahogany.

"Isn't coming back?" he cried, like a man catching his breath. "Why isn't Tommy coming back any more?"

"He said as how he jes' couldn't," responded Caesar. "He told Massa Dunn dat he am under a promise, dat he cain't come back to the ole place any mo'."

It seemed as tho the Tory's eyes would start from his head. Deserted by Tommy? What did it mean?

"What does Dunn say about it?" he said, when he became cool.

"Him say as how he thinks Tommy's met with de young Whigs over on the other side o' de range."

"Why, they're the very young rascals I sent him out to watch. Fell into their hands, Dunn thinks? What do you think, Caesar?"

"I hain't got any opinion o' no kind," answered the servant. "But dat ghost o' de young missus——"

"Go to bed," broke in Meccam, striking the table with his clinched hand. "I'll think it all out myself. If Tommy has been turned from me by those young rapscallions, I'll make the district too hot to hold them. When boys organize against the King and fight his soldiers, there must be summary vengeance. What if these young Whigs should capture the Earl's courier with his dispatches? I wouldn't put such a mean act past them. If they do—if they do——"

The Tory of the hill sprang from his chair and stamped out upon the porch.

"I forgot," he said, in a lower tone. "The courier is miles away by now. He must be at the ford, for that is the road to Ferguson. What if those young Rebels should capture him? I dare not think of it," and a minute later he stamped back into the house.

This interesting story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

⁂

PREOCCUPIED.

There's so much health that must be used
That I have no time to feel ill;
And sorrow—let me be excused,
Of joy I first must have my fill.

There's so much beauty in this earth
I have no time for ugly things,
And life gives free so much of worth
That wealth and fame I leave to kings.

There's so much love that must be spent
That I've no time for fear or hate,
For loving every heart was meant—
Not one need be love desolate.

To jealousy and strife and greed
And such I have no time to give,
For all the time I have I need
To be just happy and to live!

⁂

GRANDPA IN LINE.

"I certainly had a lively time when I stopped off at Grandpa Burchard's this trip," announced the man who had just ordered planked steak without apologizing for his affluence. "And I readjusted the family before I left! They are still dazed, but I expect they will remake their wills in my favor when they realize what I've done for them!

"Grandpa Burchard is a patriarchial old person, who lives in state, surrounded by the families of his married son and daughter, several servants and Grandma Burchard. On most subjects he can be argued with, but in regard to the movies he is adamant. Years ago he formed the opinion that everything so weird and unheard of as a moving picture was an invention of the evil one and that those who deliberately went to look upon it were lost souls. When a moving-picture theater went up in the town he almost died of wrath and chagrin, and if an unfortunate visitor so much as mentioned the movies in his house the heavens fell! That theater simply didn't exist so far as the Burchard household is concerned.

"I was always a simp—if there was a bed of freshly mixed mortar anywhere within a mile of our house as a boy, I'd scale precipices to fall into it! So it was entirely in keeping with my native character that I should forget all about the situation and pick out the movies as a cute subject of conversation at Grandpa Burchard's.

"I introduced the tender topic right in the middle of lunch," he continued. "'I see by the billboards,'" I said, 'that you have the famous star, Susan Samson, here today in "A Turnip's Tears." I'll stand treat to the whole family at the eight o'clock show!'

"The bombshell of silence which burst upon my ears should have warned me, but I gabbled right on.

"'They say,' I sang, 'that she makes a salary of $75,000 a year and is still under 30 and a good cook, and in love with her husband! Aren't her eyes great?'

"I looked up in time to see Grandpa Burchard in the act of passing away. Grandma Burchard was scared pink.

"'W-w-we don't approve of the movies here, Ellis,' she stuttered at last.

"'What!' I shouted, gazing around at faces young and old. 'Mean to say you never go?'

"They all solemnly nodded yes and proceeded to eat very rapidly.

"'I'll never see your like out of a museum!' I told them, and just stared.

"The meal appeared to be blighted. I wasn't surprised when nobody appeared to gather around the old fireside as usual and tell what happened in 1860. Grandpa was still breathing hard and the children skipped around on tiptoe.

"Finally Estelle, the married daughter, got up. She said she had to go downtown for some thread and she might stop to look at Hobson's shoe sale. Two minutes later Dora, the married son's wife, exclaimed in annoyance: 'Wasn't it a shame?' she demanded. 'Almost thru with the baby's afghan and all out of yarn! Well, there was nothing for it but to get some more!' She would not wait to dress the baby for his outing this time. She would get it herself. She vanished. Grandma Burchard moved restlessly to the window. She did not look at her husband when she spoke. She said it was such a nice day that she believed she would walk over and see those geraniums Martha Parks had been talking her head off about.

"The oldest grandson slid out to go skating, he said, and the two younger girls walked in hand in hand with their things on and in sweet treble recited that they were going over to Henrietta's to sew. Just then the cook looked in to leave word she had to have some lard right away for pie crust, so she was going to step down to Main street after it in a hurry.

"I coughed and crossed my feet. I wanted to see Susan Sampson, who is a great favorite of mine, and I knew I couldn't get out in the evening, because nine o'clock is the Burchard curfew.

"'Shucks!' I cried at last. 'I'm all out of tobacco! I'll run down to the hotel cigar stand, if you don't mind!'

"Grandpa was most agreeable about it, so I grabbed my hat and beat it. I got the cigars—and then I hustled for the movies.

"Just as I put my hat under my seat somebody eased himself into the chair next me. I turned slightly and was gazing at nothing less than the astral form of Grandpa Burchard, whiskers and all. This, I told myself, was the punishment meted out to me for deceiving the trusting old man—Heaven help me!

"Just then the astral spirit swore.

"'Shucks!' it repeated and clutched my arm with talon fingers. 'Ellis!' gasped grandpa, 'I want you to understand that I came just to satisfy myself that no young woman is worth that frightful sum of money a year! And I wished to ascertain whether it was true that she can cook! Of course that would mitigate the offense!'

"Yep, they were all there. When the lights went up the cook was sitting in front of us, the married daughters were six rows up, the kids tumbled down from the balcony, and blessed if Grandma Burchard didn't bump into us in the lobby. I just marched the whole family straight home, and I tell you they were a chastened bunch, particularly grandpa.

"I said that seeing how they had all started down the pathway of sin they might as well travel fast, and I would send them all the movie magazines if they would promise to take in the shows like human beings—and they promised.

"Grandpa will never be the same man again—he's livened up so you wouldn't know him!"

⁂

Fear of Limits.

"I'm just sick at heart over it," said the nervous neighbor, registering her just indignation by gesticulating with her mouth, shoulders and back. "They are going to plow up this street again!"

"Is that so?" answered the calm neighbor, quietly.

"Why, yes. And do you know what they did the last time they graded this street? They plowed up eleven water pipes and it was awful! Just awful! I can't stand it! I'm going to go away and stay until it's all over.

"And the dust!" The nervous woman waved her hands, turned her head away from her calm neighbor, and twisted down the corners of her mouth by way of expressing the fact that the dust was the limit. "You get it all over the furniture and the parlor and the dining-room and the kitchen. It gets all over the biscuits and it's gritty—I'm going away until it's all over!"

"I guess I will, too," agreed the calm lady, "if it's as bad as you say. I'm not ready to bite the dust yet myself."

"What's that?" cried the husband of the calm woman, entering suddenly from the library.

"Why," explained the calm woman, "Mrs. Fidget says that they are going to plow up the street and that they will break all the water pipes and fill the street with water and the dust will be just awful and cover everything in the house, including the biscuits, and they will be awful gritty chewing, and—it's going to be the limit."

"Don't worry," responded the calm woman's husband. "Things never turn out to be 'the limit.' Let me tell you.

"There was that day, a considerable number of years ago, when I hated to go to school so badly that I decided to play hooky because the teacher was going to lick me and send me to the principal, and the principal was going to lick me and make me tell on three boys who put rubber on the stove, and then the three boys were going to lick me! To sum the matter up, it was going to be the limit!

"But I was mistaken, for on that particular day they let all the school kids go to the circus and nobody got punished at all. But I had played truant, and from the garret where I was hiding I saw the whole bunch go tramping by on their way to the show, rubber burners and all, and everybody was smiling and happy.

"Since that memorable occasion I have always considered it foolish to fear and anticipate the limit."

⁂

The Ancestor.

A connoisseur of paintings saw in the window of a second-hand dealer's shop the portrait of an admiral in full uniform. He offered the dealer $250 for it, but the latter declined to sell under $375, and, as neither would give way, the picture remained in the shop. A little time afterward the connoisseur saw the picture hanging in the dining-room of a certain house he happened to be visiting. With an exclamation of surprise he walked toward it.

"Halloa, what have you got here?" he said.

His host replied that the portrait had just been bequeathed to him, and added: "It is the portrait of one of Nelson's admirals, an ancestor of ours."

"Was he, indeed?" commented the connoisseur. "A month ago he was within $125 of becoming one of mine."

What Our Neighbors Say

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Mrs. B. J. Krueper, who resides at 629 Payson Ave., Quincy, Ill., says: "I have been helped by both Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription and Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. After recovering from a severe cold it left me with a nasty cough. I took the 'Golden Medical Discovery' and it was only a short time until I was entirely relieved of the cough. I have also taken Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription when I was in a nervous, run-down condition and it always built me up. These remedies are both very good and I am glad to recommend them."

Mr. F. M. Gourley of Neoga, Ill., writes: "Some six years ago I was all run down from work and worry. Am a blacksmith by trade. I had to give up work as I was so nervous at times I did not know what to do. I could eat scarcely anything; got so weak I could hardly walk from the house to the barn. Was in this condition for about a month when I commenced to use Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery and Pleasant Pellets, using 12 bottles of 'Discovery' and two vials of 'Pellets.' After using the above remedies I felt like a new person and since that I have been using Dr. Pierce's remedies whenever I need a medicine. I find they do me more good than any medicine I ever used, and I am ever ready to tell others of the good they have done me and my faith in them."

Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery contains no alcohol, no narcotics. Is put up in both liquid and tablets and is to be found at all drug stores. If not obtainable at your dealer's send $1.00 to Dr. Pierce, Invalids' Hotel, Buffalo, N. Y., and he will send large package of tablets, or send fifty cents for smaller size.

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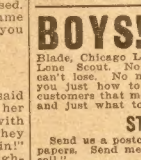

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The Test.

Two officers on board a vessel, the crew of which were part English and part Irish, had a dispute respecting their capacities. The officer who favored the latter country asserted that the lower class of the English did not inherit that quickness of intellect which the Irish possessed. A bet having taken place on the subject, it was to be decided by the answer which each countryman gave to a certain question. First, the English sailor was asked what he would take to go aloft, blindfolded, in a hard gale.

"I would take a month's pay," replied he.

"And you, Paddy," asked the questioner, "what would yo take?"

"Begorra," said Paddy, "I would take fast hold, to be sure."

Their Passport.

Senator Jones once told at a luncheon in Washington, a Senate story.

"We'd be a hard lot, indeed, we Senators," he said, "if we were as black as we're painted. I heard a dreadful story against us yesterday.

"Two ladies, it appeared, came to the visitors' gallery and demanded admission, but they had no cards.

"'If you have no cards, ladies,' said the doorkeeper, 'perhaps you know one of the Senators, and can get a card from him?'

"'Oh, no, we don't know any Senators,' they said hastily.

"The doorkeeper bowed low.

"'That, ladies,' he said, 'is very much to your credit. Pass right in.'"

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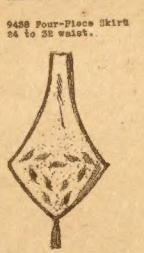

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And makes him stay at home from school,
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And that is why, 'twixt you and me,
An Upsidowney I would be.

EUREKA'S GOOD LUCK.

Grandfather came back from town early one afternoon, and while he warmed his hands before the great open fire in the dining-room, he said to grandmother, who was knitting mittens for some children I know:

"You know, grandmother, that I have never hurt an animal in my life—I couldn't drown those kittens any more than you could. But they must go."

"Yes," said grandmother, "there's no two ways about it. Eureka isn't worth her salt. She hasn't caught a mouse for a year. And now, instead of teaching those kittens to be mousers, she is teaching them to be thieves—they must go."

A curly head bobbed up from the corner of the old lounge, and two big eyes gazed at grandmother. It was Constance, and she looked very much disturbed.

"But, grandmother," she said, "they are so dear and—and—cunning."

"They are dear," replied grandmother leaning over and smoothing Constance's curls, "very dear—why only this morning Eureka Fagin and her four little helpers carried off a whole steak that I had bought for dinner."

"Why do you call her Fagin?" asked Constance. "Her own name is Eureka Patches."

"When you read 'Oliver Twist,' by Charles Dickens, you will know," said grandfather. "Fagin was a wicked man in the story who taught boys to steal."

"But I don't believe she means to steal," declared Constance.

"Every animal on this farm must earn its living," said grandfather, sternly. "The other cats earn theirs and Eureka should earn hers. You heard what grandmother said about it. I have found a place to leave the old cat and some children down in the village want the kittens, and tomorrow I shall have to take them away."

Grandfather said this last very gently, but if he had seen into Constance's heart he would have seen a very sore spot indeed, for she loved those kittens dearly, and old Eureka, too. The tears were too near the surface to talk about it further, so Constance dropped her book and slipped out of the room.

As she passed thru the kitchen she noticed the pantry door was open, and, poking her inquisitive little eyes and nose thru the opening she saw a sight that made her cry and laugh in the same breath. What she saw was Eureka Patches calmly sitting on the dresser and actually persuading those kittens to jump up. Two or three times when the little things refused to try again she jumped down and boxed their ears. Constance stood there fascinated by the sight—it was so funny—and then she sobbed as she thought how very far from funny it was that her darling Eureka Patches should actually teach her kittens such bad tricks, that tomorrow they were to be taken away forever.

If she could only devise some way to save them. Of course, they belonged to grandfather, and she was only a visitor, so she could not claim them as hers. Oh, for some happy thought that would keep them from the ungentle hands of the village children! She scolded Eureka and reasoned with her, and she lectured the kittens separately and together, and kissed each one of their little snub noses until you would think they couldn't help but reform. And that night she went to bed with a very heavy heart and a picture of a lonely life on the farm without the kittens to play with.

Eureka Patches, intelligent cat that she was, had apparently understood that a dreadful something was to happen on the morrow to her and her family, for after dark she sallied forth to find a nice resectable place to which she could move her family. The only one she could find was the haymow in the big barn, but there was no nice warm fire or convenient food. Still, something must be done.

Late that night she went back to the house to move her family. Thru a broken pane of glass she entered the kitchen, and, calling the kittens, carried them, large as they were, out into the cold.

Two she left halfway to the barn, near the chicken house, and as she brought out the third she saw that the chicken house door was ajar. This was a place more convenient than the barn and nearer food supply, so she went in to investigate. Finding a nice warm nest in the outer chicken house, she brought the kittens in, and they were immediately cuddled together and went to sleep. Then Eureka went back for Mopsy, the fattest and most frolicsome of the lot. Mopsy was not a bit sleepy, and he led his mother quite a chase when she let the nape of his neck out of her mouth for a minute. His ears had to be cuffed, and by the time the chicken house was reached they were having quite a tussle. Mopsy wouldn't go in; he heard a noise of chickens stirring, and he refused to go. Eureka chased him and boxed his ears repeatedly, but to no avail. Then Eureka became angry, and a regular rough-and-tumble fight ensued between mother and son. They bumped this way and that, and finally knocked against the chicken house door so hard that the little piece of wood holding it open slipped away and snap, the spring lock fastened it tight!

If Eureka had only been a circus cat she would have shinned up the door, turned the spring latch (which was on the outside of the door), and then she would have pushed a block of wood in the opening to hold it while she persuaded Mopsy to enter. But Eureka was only an ordinary cat; what she did was to box Mopsy's ears soundly again, call a few times to see if her other children were asleep—lack of answer proved that they were. Then, frightened by some noise in the chicken house, she scampered back to the house with Mopsy in close pursuit. Mopsy was soon asleep under the stove, but Eureka was uneasy about her family, and she mewed so loudly under grandfather's window that before daylight he dressed and went out to see what was the matter. Then, hearing a noise in the chicken house, he went out there. To his surprise and amazement there was a light in the chicken house! Looking thru the little high window, grandfather saw a man—a rough who lived on the mountainside, and who had been suspected of stealing many times, but had never been caught in the act. He was trying to force the door open.

"Hoho!" called out grandfather, "chicken thief, eh? Keep quiet in there, young man. I have a gun here." So grandfather kept guard till daylight brought the hired man out, when the thief's hands were tied and he was taken to the village and turned over to the constable.

Grandfather told all about it at breakfast, and a hope arose in Constance's heart.

"Grandfather, I don't believe you would have caught the thief if Eureka had not awakened you by her crying."

"Pooh! Pooh!" said grandfather. "I should have been awake very soon and have found him."

"I believe Eureka knew and called you on purpose," declared loyal Constance. "And—and I think it is—is cruel to give her and the kittens away when she found the thief."

"Well, little lawyer, if you can prove her case, you shall keep them," said grandfather. And then he told grandmother he would start at half-past nine, and asked her to have a bag or basket ready for the cats.

Constance did not know how she could prove it; so she called the kittens to have a farewell hour with them. Only Mopsy was to be found.

Then Constance had an idea, and she ran out to the chicken house to see if it was correct. As she started to open the door, with Mopsy under her feet, she called to grandfather, who was in the wagon house.

Grandfather came, and opening the door, Constance led him inside—or rather Eureka led the way, and with a joyful bound jumped to the corner nest and purred lovingly to the three lonesome kittens.

Constance beamed. "Grandfather, did you put those kittens here?"

"Me?" he laughed. "I haven't ever touched 'em."

"Were they in the kitchen when you went to bed?"

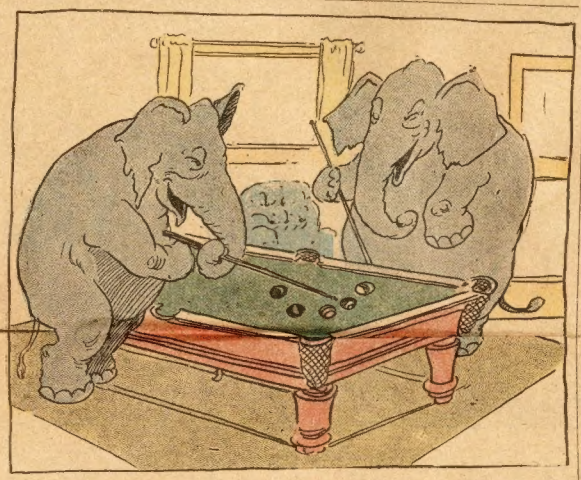
"Yes," answered grandfather.

"Was the chicken house door locked when you went to bed?"

"Yes," answered grandfather. "It always is."

"Then," said Constance, with a dignified air, "I say that Eureka carried those kittens out here and found the door open with your thief inside, and I say that she must have shut the door and caught him in for you, for he wouldn't have done it himself, would he? And Eureka sacrificed her own comfort, too, by shutting herself away from the three kittens."

Grandfather laughed till he nearly cried. "You're a lawyer, sure enough."



Edward Elephant—"Nothing beats playing pool with the balls made from one's own tusks."

WHY IS IT?

I never knew why blackberries
Are green when they are red.
I never understood how seas
Could rest so calmly at their ease
With so much sand in bed.

HIS TASK.

A little lad was boasting that he worked in a blacksmith shop.

"What do you do there?" he was asked.

"You can't shoe horses."

"No, sir," the youngster answered promptly. "I shoo flies."

BABY'S GAME.

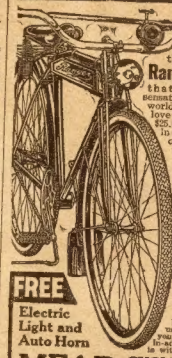
"You ought to see our baby play," said Jimmy, proudly.

"What can a six-months-old baby play?" asked Freddie.

"Bawl," laughed Jimmy.

Tommy—"We're going to move soon."
Sammy—"How do you know?"
Tommy—"How do I know? Didn't me mother lemme break a winder t'other day and didn't say nothin'?"

NO MONEY IN ADVANCE



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